Smithsonian

February 1993

Feathers aswirl, performer executes an exhilarating Plains Indian dance (p. 90)

Recently, an independent research firm compared the new $13,000* *Nissan Altima*™ against the $26,550** Lexus ES 300 to determine which car's body panels were put together with a higher level of precision.

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February 1993

Smithsonian

Volume 23, Number 11

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Photograph by Theo Westenberger

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Smithsonian (issn 0037-7333) is published monthly by the Smithsonian Associates, 900 Jefferson Drive, Washington, DC 20560.
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Subscription price is $22 a year in U.S. and possessions, $35 elsewhere. 80 percent of dues is designated for magazine subscriptions. Single copy price is $3. Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC and additional mailing offices.
Editorial offices are at 900 Jefferson Drive, Washington, DC 20560.
Advertising and circulation offices are at 420 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10170.
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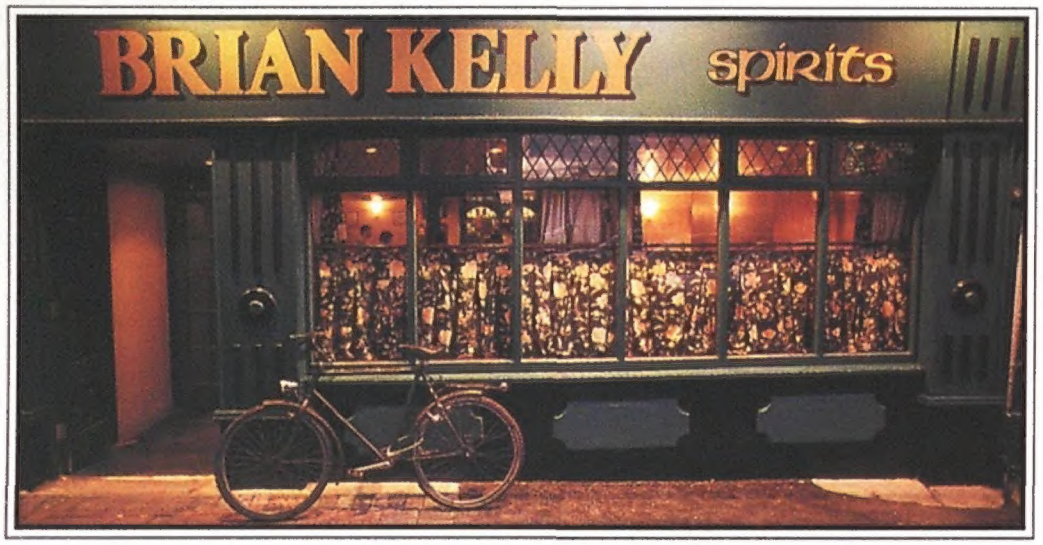

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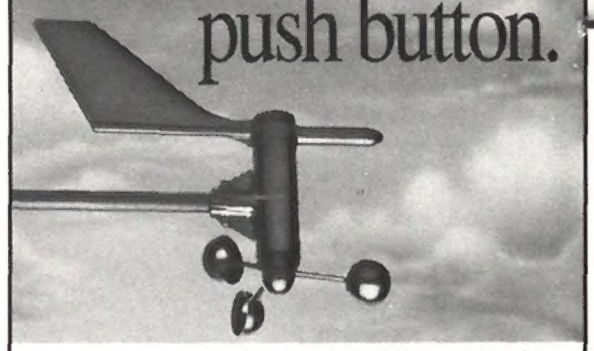

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Secretary Adams' comments

Smithsonian horizons

The arrival of a new administration invites reflections on impending changes for the Institution as well

The stirring spectacle of the inauguration of a new President and his administration in Washington naturally engages the Smithsonian on many levels. Most immediately, our Folklife Program is called upon to provide expertise for outdoor aspects of the Presidential Inauguration, and one of the Inaugural balls is customarily held in the National Air and Space Museum. More substantive, although less in the public eye, are briefing sessions with newly elected members of the House and Senate, their number higher this time than it has been since the 1948 election. Of similar importance are contacts with new officials in the executive agencies whose activities intersect with ours in numerous ways. And the new Vice President takes his place by statute on the Smithsonian's Board of Regents.

There are limits, however, to the *direct* impact of the transition on the Smithsonian. The Institution is an independent trust establishment of the United States rather than a part of the executive branch. Because it exists solely to carry out the bequest of James Smithson "for the increase and diffusion of knowledge," it technically performs no functions of the government. Its ruling body is a Board of Regents, of which the Chief Justice is Chancellor. The board also includes members of the House and Senate as well as citizens from different states and the District of Columbia who are appointed by joint resolutions of Congress. The Secretary is an appointee of the Regents, rather than the President, and most of the Institution's senior management also is not a part of the federal civilian work force. These provisions, uniquely applying to the Smithsonian ever since they were mandated by the Congress in founding the Institution in 1846, assure a significant degree of independence.

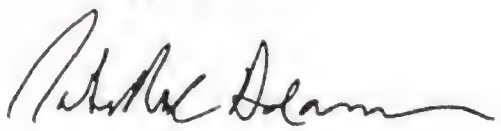
This detachment, however, is strictly qualified by accountability. An annual Congressional appropriation, accompanied by subcommittee hearings and following scrutiny of the Smithsonian's initial proposals by the Office of Management and Budget at the White House, covers the larger part of our budget and sustains most of our core programs. New capital spending proposals that entail federal support require hearings by appropriate authorizing committees and legislative approval before their appropriations are considered. House and Senate consideration, accompanied by much ongoing, informal discussion about details of our operations, thus provides extensive oversight supplementing that of the Regents.

Independence gains some real substance, on the other hand, through the nonappropriated or Trust Fund side of our operations; after all, the Smithsonian was conceived from the beginning as a public-private partnership. The readers of this magazine, numbering more than two million Smithsonian Associates, include more than 70,000 Contributing Members upon whose special generosity we draw annually. Other gifts and foundation grants are supplemented by government contracts in some areas. Then there is income from our endowment and from our own business activities—shops, restaurants, Smithsonian Press, SMITHSONIAN magazine, catalog sales and the like. Although much smaller than the Institution's federal funding, these are vital sources of unrestricted support for our research, exhibitions, acquisitions, fellowships and educational outreach programs.

As we have taken part in a smooth, democratically mandated transition—still so exceptional in the contemporary world—my own attention inevitably turns to the severe challenges lying ahead for the Smithsonian. Several key sources of our nonappropriated income have declined in recent years, and the economic recovery currently under way does not promise more than a delayed and partial restoration. Along with almost all other nonprofit institutions of your acquaintance, we are looking with increasing urgency to individual donors.

On the appropriated side of our budget, there is no gainsaying the importance of the looming federal deficit and of social, health, education, housing and other priorities with which the President and the Congress must deal. Having grown enormously, the Smithsonian now has to face escalating costs for replacing equipment and repairing aging facilities. There are newly mandated imperatives, such as for environmental safety and handicapped access, and growing demands for public service that in their own way are testimonials to the value of what the Institution stands for. The likelihood is that we would have to run harder and harder just to remain as we are—and still would lose the race if we opted for this as our standpat objective.

So for the Smithsonian, too, it turns out that there is currently a very real transition. This is a time for carefully setting priorities, and for assessing the quality, breadth of outreach and responsiveness to scientific need and public demand for what we do. I anticipate that there will be some downsizing on this basis. But if so, it will be done to provide the vision and flexibility, first to strengthen the best and most crucial of our current activities, and then to meet new needs and opportunities that will surely present themselves as the next century approaches.



Letters to the Editor

St. John the Divine

Dear Sir: About eight years ago, St. John's, featured in your December issue, inaugurated the Poets' Corner, honoring two American writers every year, with names and brief quotations carved in the stone floor. At one impressive ceremony such celebrities as Gregory Peck and Walter Cronkite and some well-known writers paid tribute to Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson. This year, the two being inducted into the Poets' Corner are Edith Wharton and William Carlos Williams. St. John's is filling an important gap in American culture, which so often ignores its own writers unless they are current money-making machines.
Barbara Adams
Newburgh, New York

Dear Sir: On page 42, the authors indicated that, during a memorial service, shouting protesters were forcibly ejected from the cathedral by Secret Service agents. The Defense Department officials mentioned are protected by DOD personnel; Secret Service protection is a very rare and exclusive commodity. Their mission is to shield protectees from assault, not from political heat. Ejections for disruption would fall under the jurisdiction of privately hired cathedral security officials or the local police.
Jim Allen
Special Agent (retired)
U.S. Secret Service
Herndon, Virginia

Dear Sir: What a vital force in the community! As a student nurse in adjacent St. Luke's Hospital School of Nursing in the 1940s, I attended candlelight ceremonies honoring Florence Nightingale in that great cathedral. Students from hospitals throughout the city carried candles in a procession for the impressive evening service.

Our graduation exercises were held in St. John's. At the end of the service, to the fanfare of the huge organ, we were exhorted to proceed out through the grand bronze doors and start our work in our chosen profession.

Then, in 1988, on the 100th anniversary of the School of Nursing, a celebration was held in the cathedral, and the alumnae once again left amid a fanfare.
Joan Henn Cordes
Glens Falls, New York

Dear Sir: On page 35 the authors quote a guide saying of the stained-glass window that included figures inspired by Jack Benny and his wife: "This window was designed in 1925."

The designer of the window was incredibly forward-looking. Benjamin Kubelsky (Jack Benny) and Sadye Marks (Mary Livingstone) were married in Waukegan, Illinois, on January 25, 1927, and did not make their first professional appearance together—in vaudeville—until later that year.
Maxwell E. Siegel
Wantage, New Jersey

Dear Sir: As a teacher of an art appreciation course at a small community college in Northern California, I assign a short term paper on a well-known artist. One student did her paper on Norman Rockwell and found that he had been a choirboy at St. John's.
Robert Kimble
Quincy, California

Dear Sir: The organ at the cathedral was built by the Skinner Organ Company. Aeolian became involved in rebuilding and redesigning it when Skinner merged the two companies in 1932.
May B. Sanford
Natick, Massachusetts

Dear Sir: My first encounter with the size of this structure was in 1943 when I was a midshipman at the USNR Midshipman's School at Columbia. "Big John" was at that time the scene of graduation exercises for most of us attending the school.

When we marched up the front steps on Amsterdam Avenue, all was silent to our ears. It wasn't until we were about halfway down the main aisle that we realized our 75-piece school band was already seated and playing in the sanctuary.
Richard M. Zitzmann
Coarsegold, California

Piero della Francesca

Dear Sir: How could you have omitted Piero's *Madonna del Parto* [below]—that wonderful, pregnant Virgin whose dress lacings have had to be loosened to accommodate her advanced pregnancy?
Diana Wright
Washington, D.C.
Here she is (detail). Ed.

Dear Sir: In preparation for a trip my wife and I made to northern Italy in the mid-1980s, I read H. V. Morton's *A Traveller In Italy.* As we approached Sansepolcro I remembered his passage on Piero's *Resurrection.*

During World War II, the British, driving the Germans north out of Italy, approached the town, where the Germans were thought to be making a last-ditch stand. The British captain had orders to shell Sansepolcro, in preparation for a troop assault.

Suddenly, he remembered Aldous Huxley's reference to Piero's fresco in the municipal building as the "greatest painting in the world." The captain countermanded his orders and told his troops to hold off until morning. Fortunately, by the next morning the Germans had fled. The Brit rushed to town and found the fresco intact.
Robert B. Wolcott jr.
Glendale, California

Elgin Marbles

Dear Sir: In recent years the various culture ministers of the European Community have struggled manfully to create a New European "directive for the restitution of national treasures after 1992." But they failed to do anything about the famous (or infamous) Elgin Marbles.

It was decided that any new laws agreed upon did not apply to objects that have been out of the country for more than 30 years. Under such a rule Greece can make no claim for the marbles. Besides, they're doing just fine in the "sooty vitals" of the British Museum.
Atwater James
Anchorage

Dear Sir: The fascinating cartoon on page 144 shows not the embassy of Lord Elgin in 1857, but the 1792-93 embassy of Lord George Macartney to the Emperor Ch'ien-lung. The ambassador presented a sample of English accomplishments in the arts and sciences. In a famous letter to George III, the emperor replied, "Our celestial empire possesses all things in abundance and lacks no product within its borders. There is therefore no need to import the manufactures of outside barbarians."
William G. Maloney
Butler, Pennsylvania

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

Dear Sir: I have never understood where the people who dream up new kinds of comic-strip warriors in defense of humanity got the idea that a ninja is a noble fellow. As far as I can figure out from my *Kenkyusha*, a user-friendly Japanese-English dictionary, "ninja" means something like "an evil person" or "an unrighteous individual."

In 16th-century Japan a ninja was a hired killer who would liquidate anybody if the price was right. He wore closely-fitted black tights for lowered visibility at night and was skilled in the use of grapnels to scale castle walls.
Frank V. Holan
Putney, Vermont

Dear Sir: My guess is that while "Ninety percent of American boys between ages 3 and 8 own at least one Turtle figure," less than 10 percent have any idea who the real Michelangelo, Raphael, Leonardo and Donatello are!

Children need to learn about *real* heroes, people who have made positive contributions to humankind.
Dennis Denenberg
Millersville University
Millersville, Pennsylvania

Dear Sir: Two years ago, when my nephew was 3, he caught Turtle fever and has been addicted ever since. Chris knows the names of all 30-plus Turtles in his collection, as well as their specialties and their choice of weapons.
Susan Hawkins
Santa Barbara, California

World War II remembered

Dear Sir: About one year before Edwards Park was zipping around over New Guinea chasing a "Tony," I was floating around off the northern coast of Cuba in a lifeboat from a just-torpedoed tanker. About half a football field away an enemy submarine surfaced. When the beam of its spotlight caught us in its glare, all of those who did not go over the side into the water dropped to the bottom of the boat. We had all seen gunned lifeboats with their pitiful contents!

After waiting what seemed ages for the bullets to come, we saw the spotlight flick off and the sub slip back under the water. Perhaps the sub captain's log showed that he couldn't quite get us in his gunsights. The wheel goes round.
T. M. Read
Lake Charles, Louisiana

Carnivorous plants

Dear Sir: Recently, I noticed the use of pitcher plant leaves in a dried flower arrangement created by a local florist. A botanist at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined that the leaves I saw were from a white-topped pitcher plant (*Sarracenia leucophylla*).

According to the same botanist, there is only one known vendor cultivating this plant; the remainder of the plants we see are picked from the wild. When I asked the florist about the source of his plant, he referred to it as a "cobra lily" and refused to acknowledge that there could be any other source for it except from a cultivator.

Subsequent conversations with a representative of the Society of American Florists heightened my concern about the industry's lack of conscience regarding the use of rare plants. According to the SAF there is no policy that covers the use of rare plants beyond what is allowed by law.
Sandra J. Crystall
Arlington, Virginia

Science cook

Dear Sir: The "near perfect" experimental bird in your closing photograph, on page 119, is not so from a health-safety perspective. An internal temperature of 140 degrees F is not high enough to kill off all salmonella and other bacteria on or within the chicken that could cause human disease.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture recommend—and most state and local public health agencies require—that all poultry be cooked to an internal temperature of 165 degrees F in the deepest, densest part of the bird. This temperature is sufficient to kill all microorganisms present.

Some statutes in certain areas also prohibit commercial food services from stuffing poultry because such mixtures, which serve as excellent media for incubating and growing microorganisms, may not reach the same internal temperature as the bird being cooked, thereby presenting a potential health risk.

Although there are no prohibitions for poultry cooked in the home, it is clearly best to follow the aforementioned recommendations to prevent food poisoning. Each year in the United States there are numerous outbreaks of salmonellosis reported to health authorities. Up to 5 percent of those cases are fatal. Thus, while a bird cooked to 140 F may be tender and succulent, it could also be deadly.
Melvin N. Kramer, President
Environmental Health Associates, Ltd.
Baltimore

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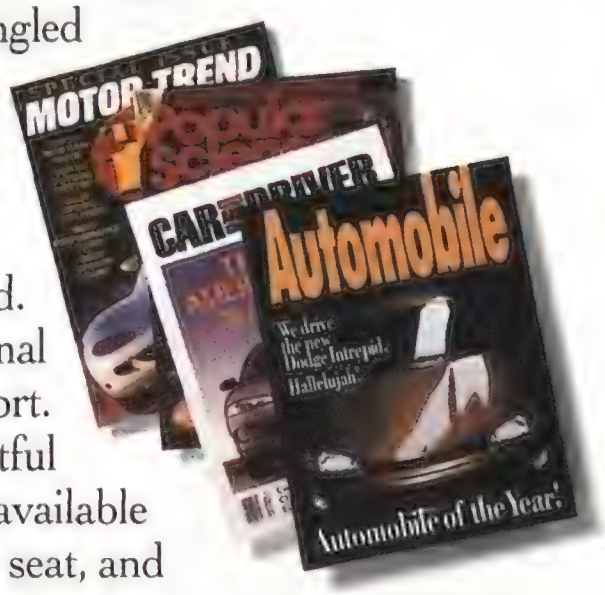

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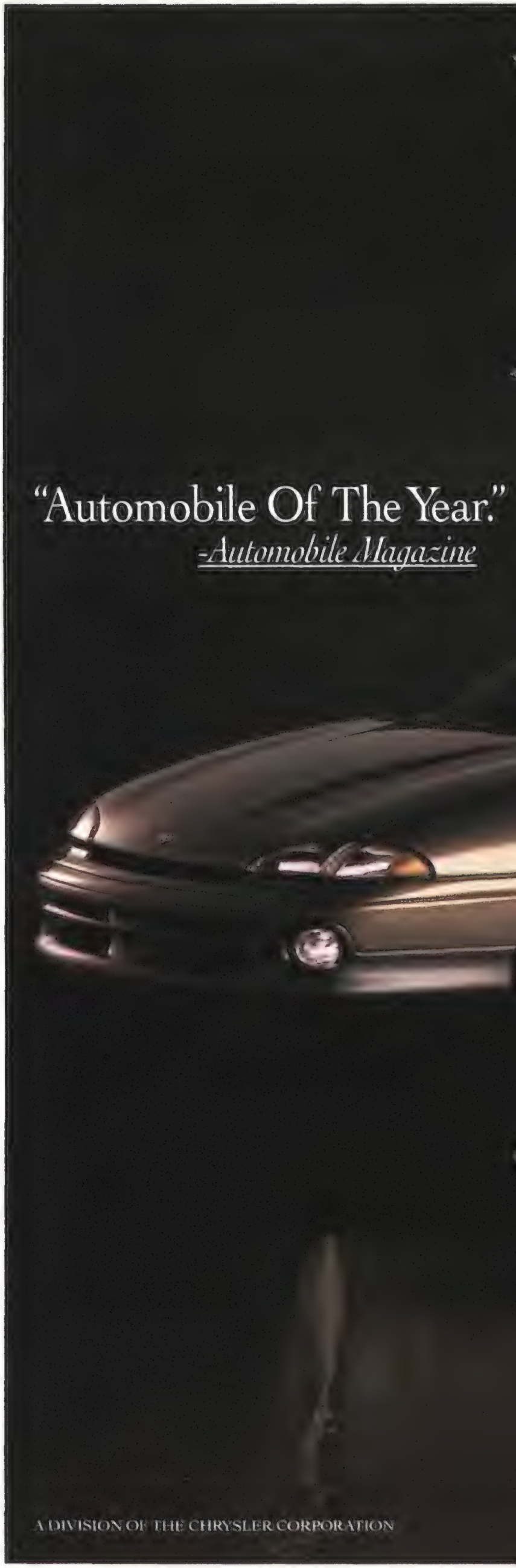

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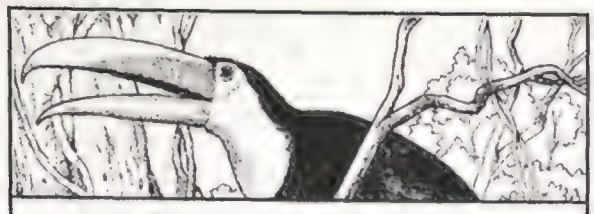

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Around the Mall and beyond

After 13 years at American History's helm, ever-restless Roger Kennedy sets his sails for the land of television

Exactly seven years ago, in February 1986, this column described the opening of a grand new show at the National Museum of American History. It was the now well-known "After the Revolution: Everyday Life in America, 1780-1800." Before exploring this look at the past, visitors were briefed by a film.

The commentary that accompanied the film was important, and eloquently delivered. I surmised that the museum had hired some professional narrator at shuddering expense, but my guide pointed out that the pro hadn't cost a cent. That pleasant, authoritative voice belonged to NMAH director Roger Kennedy. So I learned that this relative newcomer to the Smithsonian could wear more than one hat. Just how many more I didn't realize until a gray afternoon a few weeks ago.

I catch him in his fifth-floor office over at the museum. He's now director emeritus—no formal dark suit, just shirtsleeves. He slings himself sidesaddle into an armchair, long legs asprawl. Obviously he's savoring the informality that retirement, last fall, has brought him.

I mention his television series, *Roger Kennedy's Rediscovering America*. It's already brought us "Indians Among Us," "The *Real* American Cowboy" and "Railroads, Robbers & Rebels," and will present us with a show about pirates this May.

"This is not educational TV," he says. "It's not 'I know, and I'm going to tell you,' but 'Let's find out together.' The tiny number of things I do know well

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are subjects I'll never try to use in the series. But with cowboys, for example, we can wander around together and share the same sense of discovery."

In "Cowboy" we learn, among other things, that there were and are lots of cowgirls, and that a third of all cowpunchers were black or Hispanic. And we discover that it was bad form to ride your horse upwind of camp because you'd get dust on the beans.

Kennedy says that as long as the patience of his sponsors, the Chrysler Corporation and the Discovery Channel, holds out, he'll roam around the country, probing into the past and having fun. "I've always thought that approach induces learning."

He quickly reveals his many facets. He's part scholar, part administrator, part showman, part politician, part idealist—and boyishly eager about every part. His background is straight out of the old Jimmy Stewart movies, strong on American verities. It's St. Paul, Minnesota: a serene, elm-shaded street where a kid on a bike tosses the evening paper onto broad front porches. "The big elms have now all died of disease," he says, "and I once figured that the price of houses has gone up 30 times since then."

It was from this Midwestern boyhood that Kennedy moved into a restless career of radio and television, government positions, finance, the study and criticism of architecture, a dabbling in history and science. This broad range of interests is evident in the pilot film he put together to sell his new TV series. In it, history melds into anthropology, architecture blends with archaeology. The disciplines merge naturally, taking us viewers for a pleasant ramble.

It begins in a Midwestern setting near Columbus, Ohio. We are looking at the mysterious Indian mounds, huge pre-Columbian pyramids and earthen designs rising on the land. "I chose this subject because the mounds aren't well-known and Ohio seems an unlikely place to find them," he tells me. "Also, its capital happens to be Columbus, which was just the right name in 1992 for talking about exploration and discovery."

His film moves on to a look at more-modern monuments, splendid old Midwestern buildings. "The Midwest *means* architecture," Roger says. "I've always loved the buildings in Minnesota's little towns, and sometimes wrote articles about them. I met survivors from the great days of Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan."

Politics always fascinated Kennedy, so after college, the Navy and law school, he ran for Congress. He lost handily to the incumbent, Eugene McCarthy. "It wasn't a friendly campaign," he confides. "We now have a respectful, whimsical but barbed relationship."

Kennedy landed a Washington job anyway as special assistant to Assistant U.S. Attorney General Warren Burger, who later became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. But television fascinated him, too, so he went for an opening at NBC and won a spot on Dave Garroway's old *Today* show. He also covered the White House and even had a radio show called *Collector's Item*.

I bite at that. Did it indicate a lurking interest in collections? In museums? He barks in triumphant laughter. "Not in the slightest!"

He continued drifting into government jobs—more of the "special assistant" stuff—between and along with his broad-

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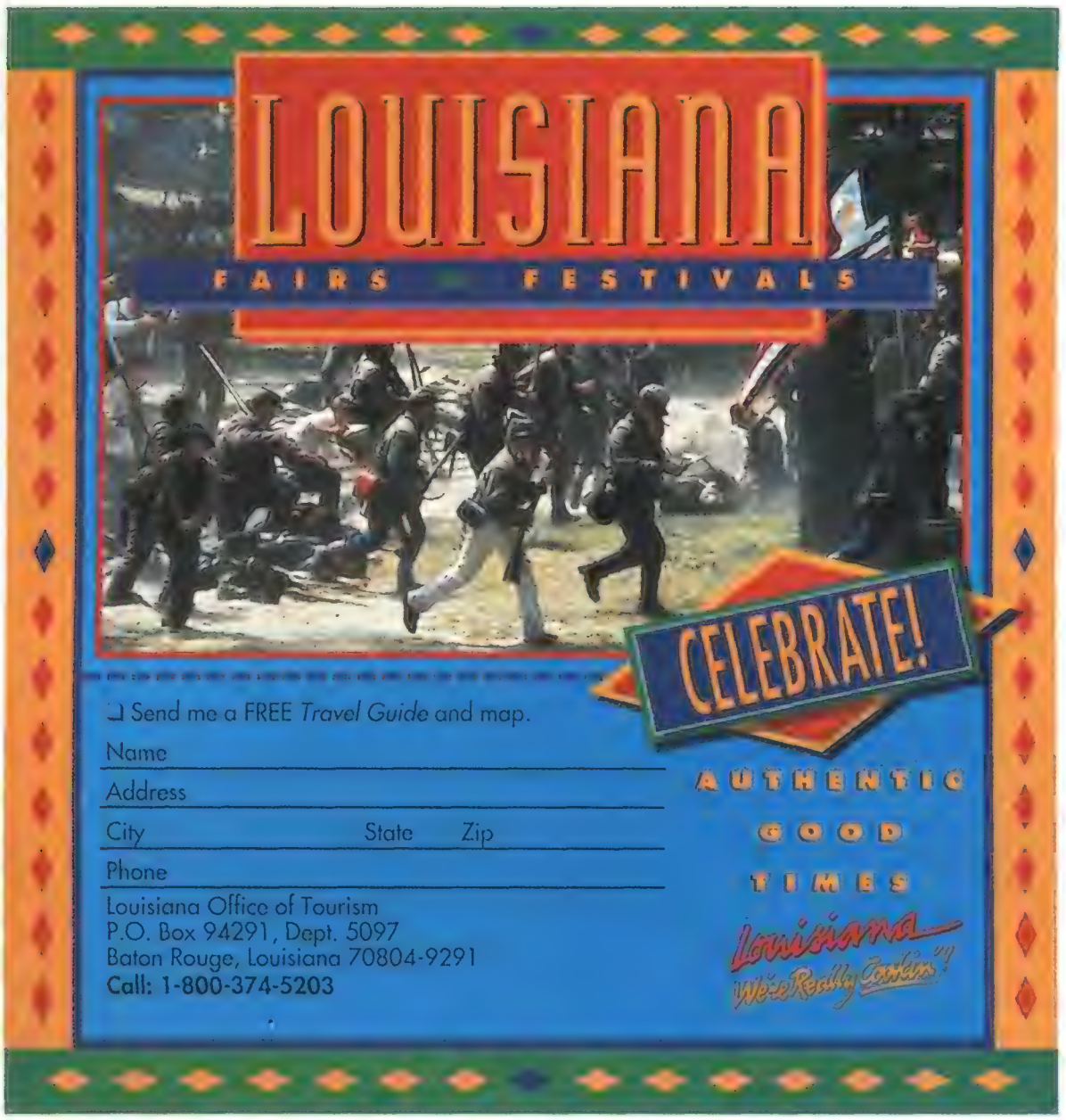


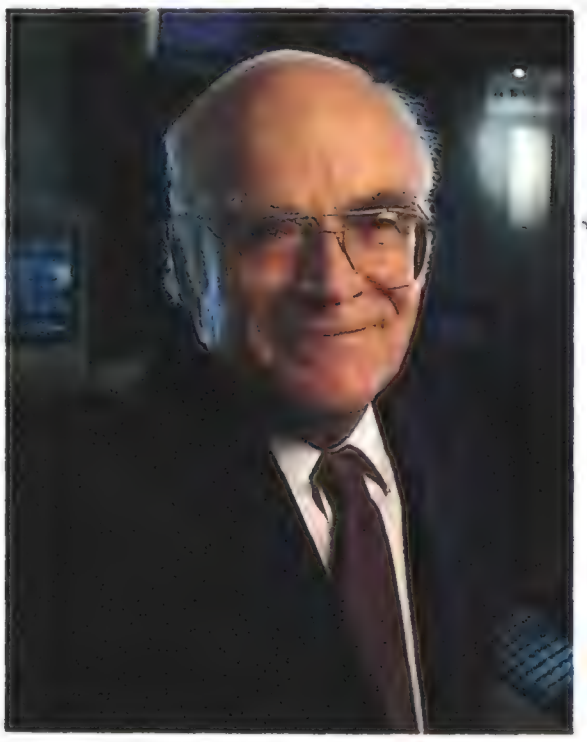
casting career. "I finally got fired, along with my boss and the whole news team. Then I met my wife, got married and decided it was time to get down to work."

Work? To Kennedy, back in the '50s, that meant Washington, but his latest special assistant position didn't last. To start over again, he returned to St. Paul and went into banking. Just like that—no experience, no particular college background in economics.

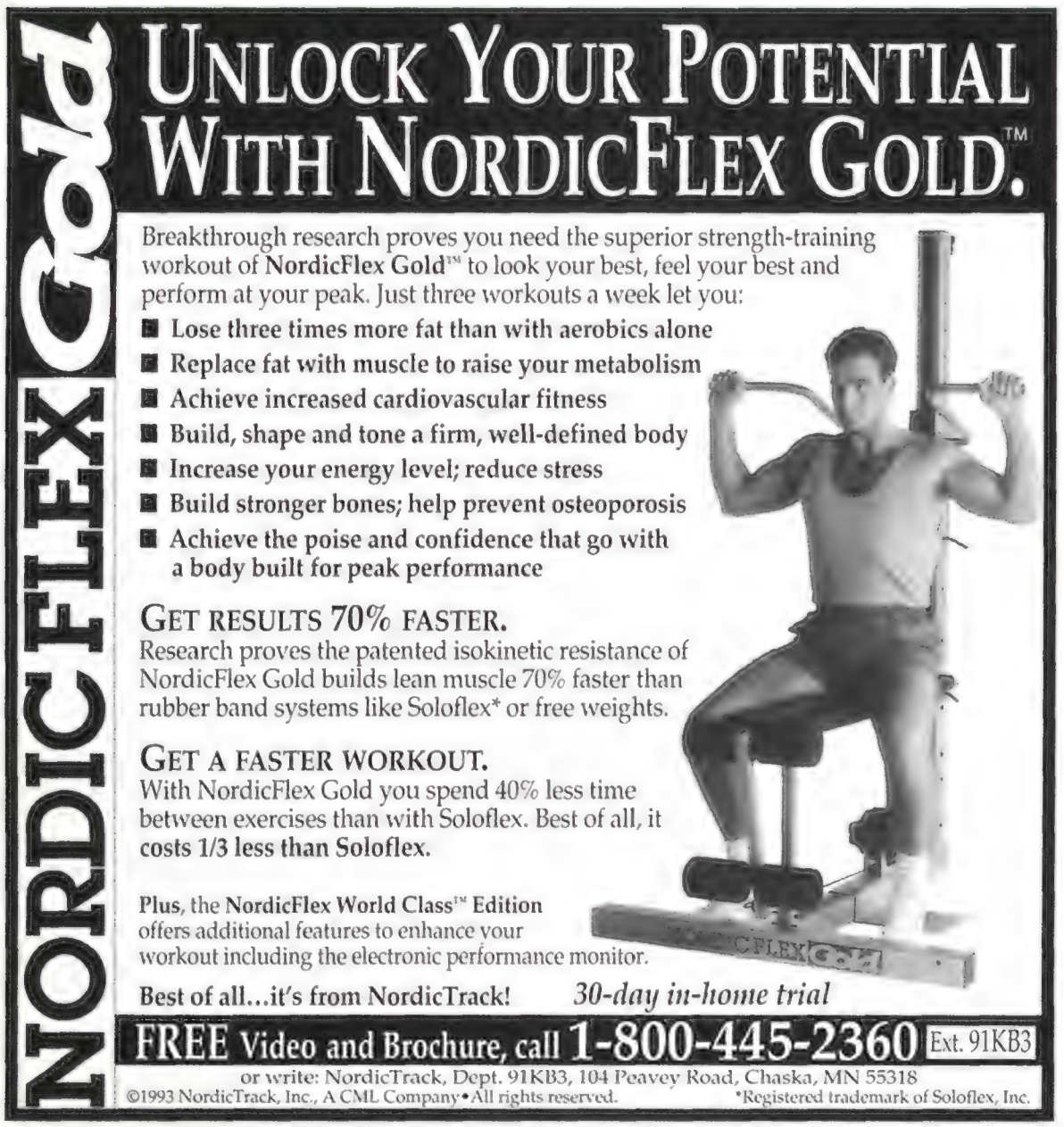
Fortunately, times were good. Roger rode the real estate boom of the '60s, and as banks prospered, so did he. As he talks, there in his comfortable office, he often shifts position in his chair or rises from it to move about. Since I tend to restlessness I recognize it in him. So when he tells me that in 1969 he went to the University of Minnesota and became vice president for investments, I'm hardly surprised.

The Kennedy odyssey continues with yet another career: the Ford Foundation. Through the '70s he worked there, reorganizing investments to get on firmer financial ground. In 1979 he came to the Smithsonian. "I was given a very rosy picture of a serene life on the Smithsonian's 'campus,' of coming to work at 10. I sometimes ruefully think that someday, for someone, it may be true."

His museum was called History and Technology back then. He changed the name, ripped out the central escalators, rescued the original Star-Spangled Banner from the ravages of time and dust by limiting its public appearances,



Thematic exhibits like "Information Age" are Director Kennedy's trademark.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and got going on some new exhibits.

For good or ill (it's still being argued) Kennedy changed the major thrust of the museum from presenting objects to presenting themes. "After the Revolution" was an early one. "Information Age: People, Information & Technology" (see *Mall*, July 1990) was another.

There are many more thematic examples, but one of the most striking is the new "First Ladies: Political Role and Public Image." Thousands of Smithsonian watchers remember this as a display of First Ladies' gowns. They were beautiful and interesting, and if you cared to spend a little time at the exhibit it revealed tiny bits of history.

The new "First Ladies" focuses on the women, their stories and their concepts of the task before them. All the gowns that can stand the light and exposure are still there, nearly 20 of them, but the history is more complex.

Sometimes the Kennedy touch has caught everyone off guard. In 1987, his museum marked the U.S. Constitution's 200th anniversary by trotting out one of the worst examples of our *failure* to heed its principles: the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II.

So, restless Roger Kennedy is now sailing off again on another tack, doing his television show, doing it his way, enjoying it. As he says, "I'm bald. I have wattles. I will never be a big star. I have nothing to prove about myself. I only want to be a good craftsman and not let down the team of craftsmen who work with me."

Plans? Maybe a show on Jefferson, maybe one called "Missions." He's got some ideas about Cole Porter and F. Scott Fitzgerald. The show on pirates? Roger rises again, abruptly, and paces back and forth across his carpet twice. "Look, they were an alternative society, practicing a cult of violence. Hijacking—that's familiar to us today. We'll track them through the Caribbean—though they showed up all over the world—and explore the wrecks. Sure, I'll dive. I try to keep in shape by swimming every day. Anyway, we'll talk about their life and hope to stir people to say, 'Gee! I didn't know that!' "

That's of course exactly the response that this magazine seeks, that this Institution should inspire. So it seems that Roger Kennedy's been thoroughly infected by us during his years here. And the world of television stands to gain.

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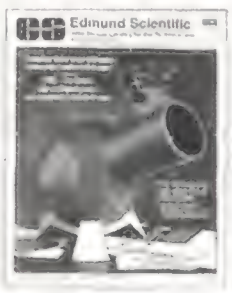

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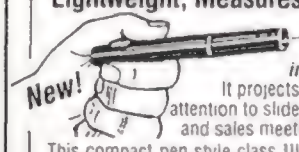

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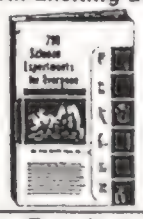

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Phenomena, comment and notes

A Chicago symposium quietly marks the 50th anniversary of the chain reaction that began the nuclear age

You really have to love Chicago to go there in December. The overcast sky seems to turn the whole city a cold, steely gray, and the streets begin to clear as people start to get ready for hibernation. I was born in Chicago, and I do love the place, but that wasn't what had brought me there. Along with a few hundred others, I was there to attend a symposium commemorating one of the seminal events of the 20th century—the creation of the first controlled, self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction, on December 2, 1942.

The bare facts are simple. In 1938 scientists in Berlin demonstrated that the uranium atom could be split. In the process, the awesome power of the nucleus of the atom was unlocked, providing a source of energy a million times greater than that of ordinary chemical reactions. Shortly thereafter President Franklin Roosevelt, having been warned that Germany might turn this discovery into a weapon of unsurpassed destructiveness, set up what became the Manhattan Project to get America into the nuclear race. Part of the overall strategy involved building a nuclear reactor to produce plutonium. One of Roosevelt's science advisers was Arthur Compton, a Nobel laureate at the University of Chicago; when people from Harvard said they "wouldn't touch the project with a ten-foot pole," he brought it home. A team was assembled under the leadership of Enrico Fermi (another Nobel laureate, who had fled Hitler's Europe), and the first atomic reactor was assembled in a squash court under the stands of the abandoned football stadium.

To anyone growing up in Chicago, the "reactor under the stands" was as much a part of the city's legendary past as "Hinky Dink" Kenna, the turn-of-the-century alderman whose credo ("If you don't go to other people's funerals, they won't go to yours") still dominates local politics. I can remember my high school boxing coach talking about taking soccer teams down to the stadium during the war. "All these guys in white coats used to come out and cheer," he said. "I had no idea who they were. If I had only known—they could probably have taken one little piece of stuff and blown us all up."

The stadium is long since gone, the space it once occupied now taken by the main university library. In a little paved square on a side street, a modern sculpture by Henry Moore and a brass plaque mark the historic spot. But 50 years ago, under that long-vanished stadium, humanity passed a milestone that, for better or worse, continues to influence the life of every person on the planet.

And that, I suppose, is why the symposium had been organized. The organizers apparently weren't anxious to attract protesters and had buried the meeting as one session in a dry, academic conference on the history of science in the first half of the 20th century.

Looking at the list of speakers reminded me of one minor consequence of the Manhattan Project. The lives of physicists of my generation have been punctuated by little jolts of discovery as we find out that a professor or mentor was part of the group that made the first atomic bombs. One of the speakers that day, Albert Wattenberg of the University of Illinois, recalled that process vividly for me. As a student (and later as a junior faculty member), I had known Al as a distinguished experimental physicist as well as a genuinely nice guy—the sort of man who was always ready with a pleasant smile or a word of encouragement when things weren't going well. Imagine my surprise, then, when I read a history of the Manhattan Project years later and found that he was not only part of it but had been present that day in 1942 when the nuclear era dawned.

"There were about 40 people involved with [the reactor]," he says, "and about 20 of us were young men. It's a pleasant experience, every ten years, to come to meetings like this as a representative of those young men."

After finishing college, Al had entered Columbia University as a graduate student in physics, supporting himself with a part-time job at a whisky distillery. "I installed a spectroscope [a then state-of-the-art instrument for detecting small amounts of impurities] to help them with quality control, and after a while I was making more money than most of my professors." When the war started, he tried to enlist in the Navy but was

In a painting done 15 years after the fact, a physicist (bottom) pulls out the last control rod. Suicide squad (at top right) stands ready to quench the reaction.

Text continues on page 27

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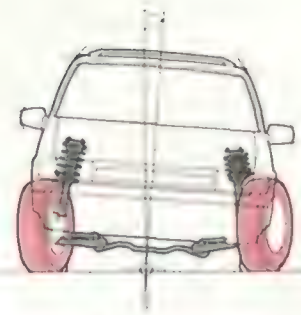

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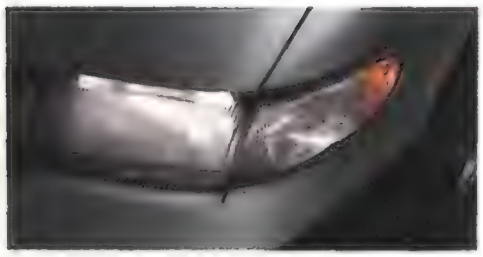

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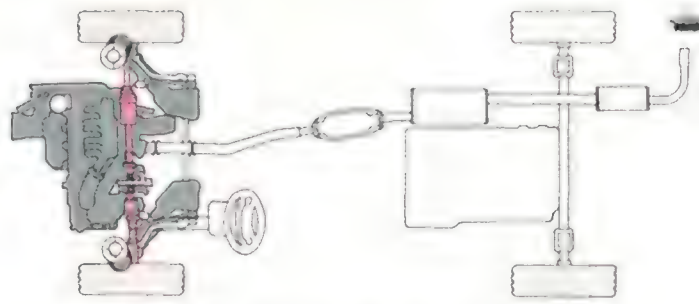

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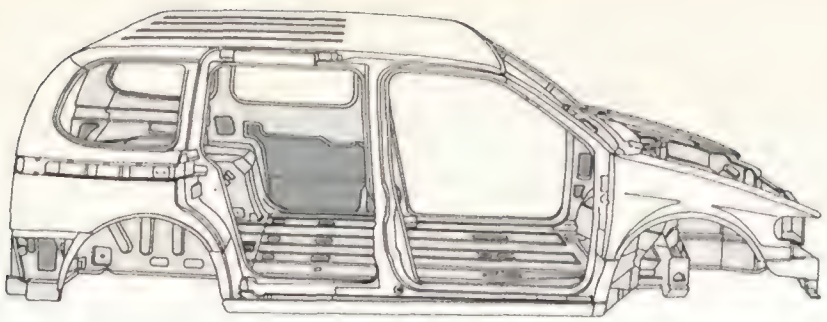

Did we mention the Nissan Quest comes with its own body guards? Steel side door guard beams provide added protection in case of a side impact. And pillar/roof reinforcements increase body rigidity.

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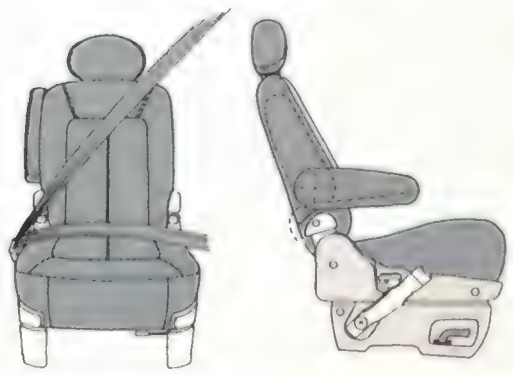

To us concerns about safety are automatic, which is why we've included front automatic motorized shoulder belts. And 3-point seat belts are found in outside positions in second and third row seats.

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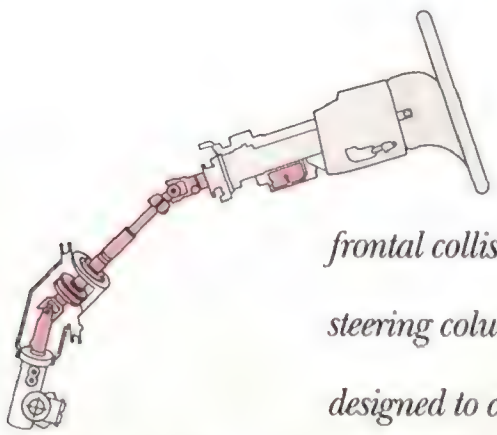

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told emphatically that there were more important things for him to do. He was already working with Fermi, so when the reactor project started up in Chicago it was natural that he would be one of the Columbia group to make the trip west.

It has been my experience that great advances in science are considerably less romantic when they are happening than in retrospect. The thrill of "pushing back the frontiers of knowledge" is almost always buried in mundane concerns about ordinary laboratory problems. As Wattenberg tells it, the building of the first nuclear reactor was no exception to this rule. From the point of view of the "grunts," the project involved taking 400 tons of brick-size chunks of pure graphite, machining them down to standard sizes, drilling holes in them, inserting 22,000 baseball-size clumps of purified uranium and then stacking the bricks in the old squash court. The simple mechanics of building the reactor occupied a small army of physicists. One, a European émigré unaccustomed to the "roll up your sleeves and pitch in" American style, hired a college football player to stack the bricks in his stead. Did this make for security problems? "We just learned not to talk around the guy," recalls Wattenberg.

The theory of the reactor (or pile, as they called it then) was simple. Some of the uranium in the pellets would split apart naturally, giving off a particle called a neutron in the process. This neutron would rattle its way through some of the graphite and slow down before it encountered another pellet. Striking a uranium nucleus, the slow neutron would cause it to split, giving off energy and two or three more neutrons. Each of these would go on to cause more splitting, which would produce more neutrons, until a chain reaction had been built up that released enormous amounts of energy. The whole thing was controlled by cadmium-coated wooden rods built into the pile. Cadmium absorbs neutrons, so as the rods were withdrawn, the chain reaction would begin. And when the rods were pushed back in, the reaction was slowed or stopped.

On December 2, 1942 (a subzero day on which the beginning of wartime gasoline rationing had tangled up the city's transit system), the whole thing was ready to go. Throughout the morning, cadmium rods were pushed in and out as the physicists fiddled with their instruments and made sure everything was ready to go. After a lunch break, the experiment started in earnest.

I would like to tell you that there was a deathly hush in the squash courts, that the thoughts of all 42 people in attendance were concentrated on the historic nature of the moment. In fact, it appears to have been a rather typical physics experiment. Fermi stood on a balcony, working out figures on his slide rule and giving instructions as the control rods were withdrawn. The only unusual feature of the afternoon was the "suicide squad," three young men standing on an elevator to the side of the pile holding large jugs of cadmium solution. If, against all expectations, the chain reaction went out of control, they were to move across the top of the pile and dump the cadmium down between the bricks, killing the reaction.

As the control rods were drawn out, Fermi did his calculations, gave the orders for the next stage of the withdrawal, and calculated again. At 3:53 P.M., he ordered the pile shut down and calmly announced that it had been producing energy for four and a half minutes. Humanity had entered the nuclear age.

"Nobody cheered," says Wattenberg. "From our point of view, it was just one more quantitative experiment in a long series. [Future Nobel laureate Eugene] Wigner brought out a bottle of Chianti, we split it among all the people present and drank a toast out of paper cups from the water cooler." Later in the day, Compton gave the news to the government in a carefully worded phone call: "The Italian navigator has landed in the New World. The natives were friendly."

At 3:53 P.M. on December 2, 1992, Al Wattenberg was just finishing his description of the experiment. Someone pointed out that the historic moment had passed. There was a polite round of applause, a few scholarly questions were asked and answered, and the audience filed out for a coffee break. Like the historic experiment 50 years earlier, the commemoration was something of an anticlimax.

But as I sat in the empty auditorium and mulled over the afternoon's events, I realized that, as unexciting as they seemed, they nevertheless had touched on something profound. Deep in our hearts, every modern scientist knows that we have struck a Faustian bargain with society. In return for being allowed to follow the profession we love, we may someday be called upon to use the knowledge we have gained as society directs, whether we think it should be used that way or not. Most of us get through our careers without having to face this sort of moral crisis, but the physicists of Al Wattenberg's generation were not let off so easily.

No scientist can sit through this sort of meeting without asking *the* question: How would I have behaved then? Knowing what they knew, would I have done what they did? This is a question I have thought about at length, and I know that I would have joined that group under the stands at Chicago. But what about the reaction of someone who was actually there? Have 50 years of reflection changed anything?

When I raise this point with Wattenberg, he talks for some time about nuclear physics—about the undoubted boon of nuclear medicine, the ambiguity of nuclear power and even about his brother. He was one of those G.I.'s on the ships preparing for the invasion of Japan when the war ended abruptly in 1945 after the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

"But would you do it again if you had it to do over?"

The answer comes without hesitation.

"Yes."

James Trefil
Robinson Professor of Physics
George Mason University

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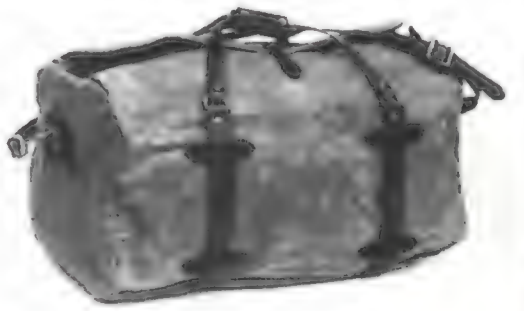

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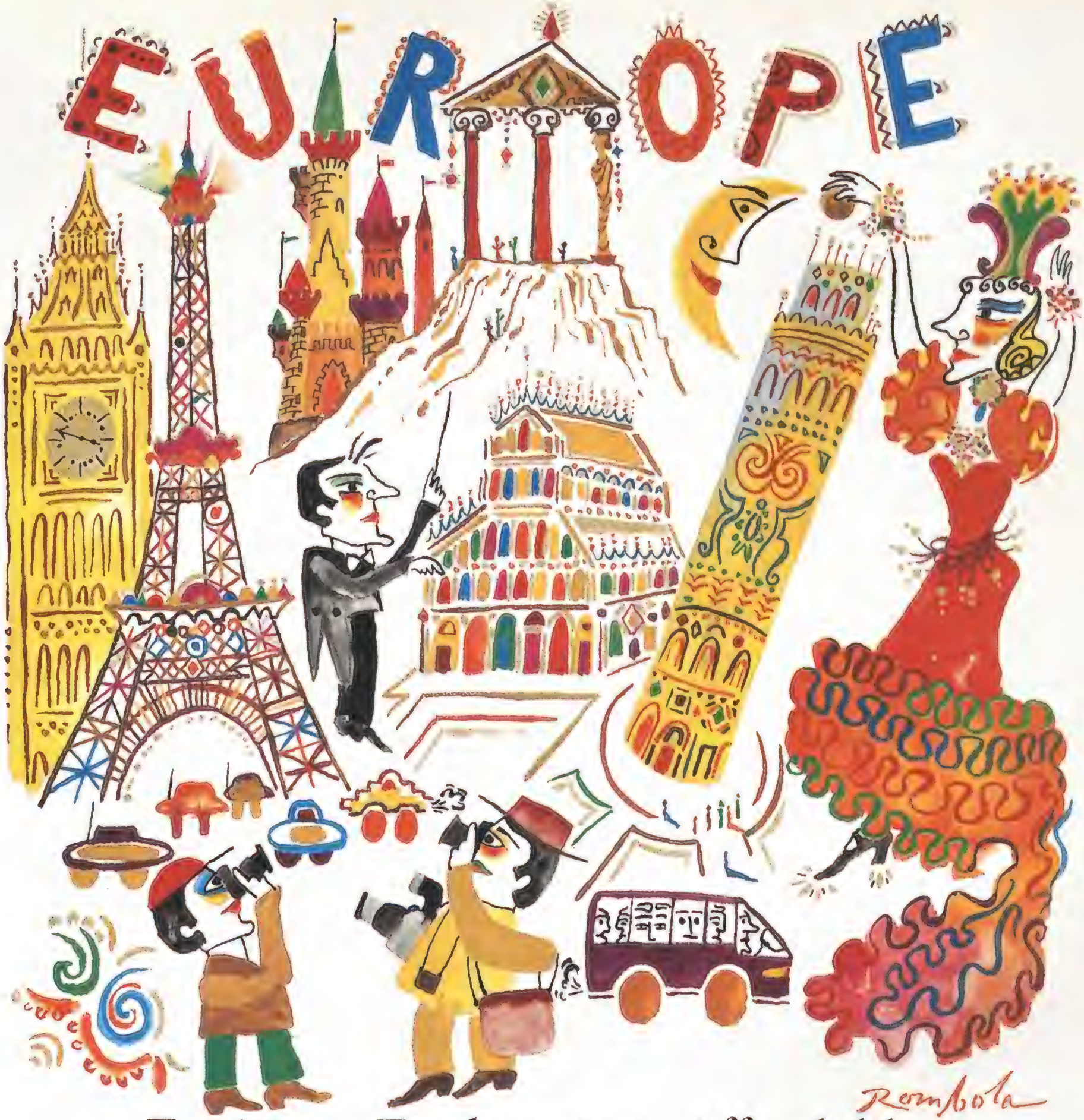

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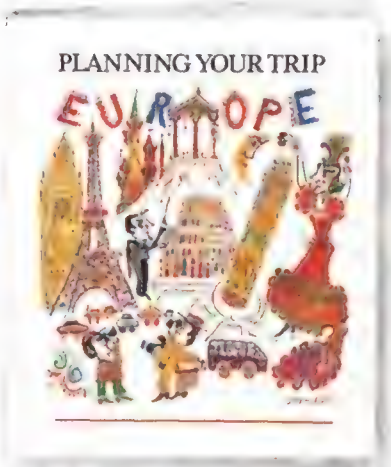

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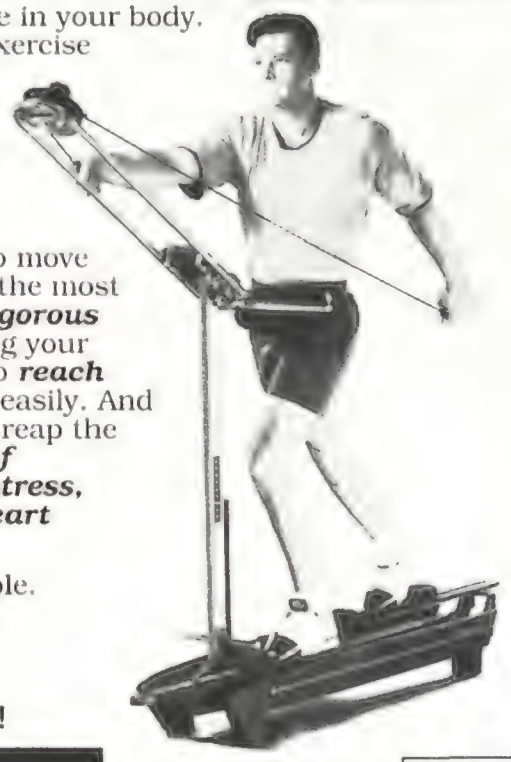

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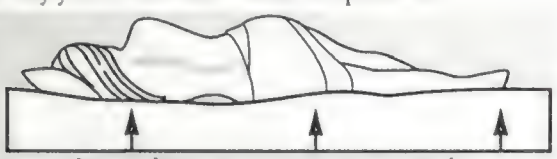

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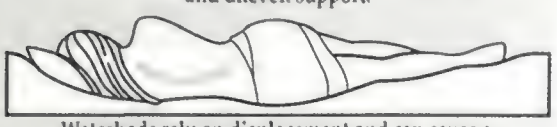

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Copper-alloy bird gong is 13 inches tall. Its 2-inch beak was struck with a rod to make a ringing sound.

National Museum of African Art and has lately resulted in a children's book called *Animals in Benin.*

Over the years the artisans of Benin continued to flourish. Business in the kingdom was often carried on using small copper-alloy ingots brought in by Portuguese traders to exchange for pepper, ivory and sometimes slaves, ensuring a plentiful supply of the alloy for the Benin casters. It was from this alloy that the bird gong in question was fashioned, probably after 1700.

About a foot tall, the gong includes a cylindrical rod that was held firmly in one hand while the bird's beak, about the size of a little finger, was struck with a small metal rod held in the other. Officially, it is called an idiophone, meaning any instrument whose resonant sound results from the vibration of its constituent materials, but to you and me, it's a gong.

As to the species of bird reproduced in the Benin gongs, ornithologists, anthropologists and art historians all disagree. Originally the ibis appeared to be the majority opinion. On the other hand, the gong birds' beaks may have been exaggerated in casting simply to make them easier to strike, so that even if you're an expert birder, it's anyone's guess.

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By Gordon Delo

Delo's Vidalia Onion Store, a distributor of farm-fresh produce from Vidalia, Georgia, announced today the release of choice, select, sweet Vidalia Onions for delivery in the U. S.

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But why shape a gong like a bird in the first place?

The answer began more than four centuries ago. The Kingdom of Benin was then ruled by a powerful oba (king) named Esigie. He lived in a large circular city surrounded by great walls and moats, and divided more or less down the middle by a wide road. The oba was regarded as a divine ruler whose good health assured the well-being of his subjects. He and his palace attendants lived apart on one side of the road in one section of the city; lesser chiefs and the rest of the population lived in another. The people saw their oba only during special ceremonies and in great processions when, by custom, he was accompanied by musicians, dwarfs and leopards on leashes.

A day came when the leader of a neighboring power, the Ata of Idah, threatened Benin with his army. Oba Esigie gathered together his warriors and set out on horseback to meet him. But just as the Benin Army was marching out of Benin City, a great bird came overhead, shrieking, "Disaster!"

The people of Benin believed that birds are messengers sent from the spirit world. So, as the story goes, when the oba's soldiers heard the bird's cry of doom, many threw down their swords, spears and bows, and ran away. The advisers to Oba Esigie counseled him to do the same. But the oba would not run. Instead, he commanded his loyal bowmen to shoot down the evil bird, which they did. And soon the threatening Ata of Idah was defeated.

In celebration of this victory, Oba Esigie ordered his artisans to cast many small copper gongs, each in the shape of the bird of doom. And he commanded his chiefs to take small rods of metal and to strike the birds across their beaks so that all people who heard the ringing sound might be reminded that their oba was so powerful he could overcome threatening fate.

The royal line of Oba Esigie reigned supreme in Benin City for several centuries, prospering steadily until the mid-19th century. In 1897, however, the British Consul in what was then the Niger Coast Protectorate was killed by Benin warriors. They claimed it was because he had intruded upon a sacred ceremony, but Queen Victoria was not amused. Britain sent a punitive naval expedition that quickly captured Benin City, exiled the current oba and seized

Intricate warrior figure may have been used on an altar. Musket shows influence of Portuguese arms on royal Benin art.

the kingdom's royal art treasures. Many were auctioned off to museums and private bidders in Europe. Years later some Benin objects found their way into American collections and eventually came as gifts and long-term loans to the Smithsonian. (The bird in question is on loan from Olga Hirshhorn, widow of Joseph Hirshhorn, whose Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in 1985 provided most of the other Benin objects now part of the National Museum of African Art.)

In 1914 Oba Esigie's dynasty was restored—but mainly to act as spiritual rulers. Even today in and around Benin City, at the time of the Ugie Oro festival, which celebrates not only Oba Esigie's victory but the ancient spiritual and temporal power of his dynasty, travelers may hear a sound they have never heard before and may never hear again. It will be the sound of gongs—of coppery birds being struck across their beaks—proclaiming to all who know the story that a divine oba succeeds where mere mortals fail.

Thomas H. Wolf

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Memphis, Tennessee
Greenville, Mississippi
Vicksburg, Mississippi
Mississippi River
Baton Rouge
New Orleans, Louisiana
Gulf of Mexico

By Michael Parfit

'And what words shall describe the Mississippi, great father of rivers'

From Memphis it's more than 700 miles of roily beauty and troubled waters to the place they call 'the end of the world'

The friendly white man who had given me a ride across the levee to the water saw a black man drive down on the mud in an old Dodge, and he spoke to me low:

"I hope you have a pistol," he said.

"I don't," I said. I walked down to the river to get my rubber boat ready. The black man got out and walked to the water with three fishing poles. A hot wind moved through the willow trees. I pumped up the boat, sweating. The white man in the pickup leaned out the window and beckoned. I walked back over. He spoke low.

"You want to borrow one?" he said.

It was the start of a strange, divided journey down the lower reaches of the Mississippi River. I was putting a 12½-foot rubber dinghy into the Wolf River, a short tributary to the Mississippi near Memphis. I was 739 river miles north of Head of Passes, the place where the Mississippi breaks into many fingers and floods out to the sea. The sea was my destination, but the journey was my reason. I was starting down the great American river, a body of water known far more in myth than in reality, a place still hidden behind the tall white columns of Mark Twain hyperbole and the Spanish moss of Faulknerian prose. This was a very old piece of our landscape of identity, laden with past symbols of the American character. Looking for new images of what the Mississippi is to us, I didn't want the first symbol to be a gun.

"No, thanks," I said to the white man.

"Be careful," he said, and moved his head as if he thought I was a fool.

The white man drove off. The black man began to fish. The wind blew hot. A little later I cranked up my nine-and-a-half-horse outboard and escaped down the Wolf. At its mouth the Mississippi lay in the sun rippling its muscle. I went out into the middle of it and shut off the motor, and the big river took my boat, spun it slowly as if to get a grip, and swept me away.

But there was no running from what had happened. As I moved down the Lower Mississippi, life marked by the countdown of mile marker signs, I thought often about that pistol. Along the river there seemed to be two stories: what was happening between the levees, where the river was, and what was happening behind the levees, where the people were. Sometimes the two stories didn't seem to have anything to do with each other, but eventually, as it often is in a region marked by illusions of separateness and peace, the two stories became one, and made a connection between the state of the river and the divided races of men and women who live on its banks.

Mile 727.7: Dutch Smith Light. I leave the city, and the writer whom I think of is not Twain but Charles Dickens:

"And what words shall describe the Mississippi, great father of rivers, who (praise be to Heaven) has no young children like him!" Dickens traveled here in 1842 and was impressed, but not favorably. ". . . its strong and frothy current choked and obstructed everywhere by huge logs and whole forest trees. . . . The banks low . . . the trees few and far apart, their inmates hollow-cheeked and pale, mosquitoes penetrating into every crack and crevice of the boat, mud and slime on everything."

For the first two days I stay between the levees. I meet mud, I meet slime, I meet mosquitoes, I meet one or two logs; I meet occasional big diesel-powered towboats that push, rather than tow, vast rafts of steel barges upstream. But mostly I find myself in a broad, quiet, simple landscape: an expanse of river, a wall of woods, birdsong and the sound of that strong and frothy current.

The Mississippi slurps and murmurs. Buoys anchored in the current roar like waterfalls. Little hissing whirlpools open for no apparent reason, then disappear. The river narrows at a place called Dismal Point, and I am surrounded by boils that come up at random to break on the surface, each with a swirl, a gurgle and a suck. When I hear one slurp behind me it's like the sudden breach of a

David McCall Johnston

whale, of some river monster rising to breathe or to feed—on small rubber boats and fools.

The Mississippi moves fast, and it stirs things up. It gathers its water from 41 percent of the continental United States—1,245,000 square miles, a vast drainage basin spread like a funnel to catch water from Montana to New York. By the time it gets to Memphis most of the collecting is done, and the drainage narrows to the funnel's mouth. It is no lazy river; it carries me and 63,000 tons of soil a day downstream at anywhere between three and a half and six miles an hour.

A year ago I stood on the bridge of a towboat named the *Jason* in the dark, with Captain Gene Craig, who wore an old Desert Storm cap with a huge fishing lure stuck in it that flopped around when he moved his head; it looked as if he were casting for one of his own eyes. We were pushing downstream 37,000 tons of scrap iron, grain and potash in 27 barges, which is more dangerous than going up. Downstream the current seems to be your ally, but in truth it's just a more subtle enemy. Upstream you fight it head on, power against power; downstream you negotiate, and you give it what it wants. If you come to a bar or the fangs of a bridge and you aren't set up right to pass through, the current is right there ready to ruin your life. All the bridge pillars on the river are gashed at the waterline to prove it, and down at Vicksburg the towboat *Lady Ree*, which hit the bridge on April 1, 1973, is still somewhere on the bottom with dead crewmen inside.

"Them bridges," Craig said, "it happens fast when it happens. Makes your knees shake and your hands sweat."

Mile 716.8: Armstrong Bar Light. On my part of the river today there are no tows. Everything is still. "I remember talking in the evening or the morning," a man who grew up on the river in a houseboat 60 years ago once told me. "You could hear every word somebody'd say. There wasn't no tractor plowing, no cars driving. The boats was steamboats. The world was quiet."

I drift far down into the heart of this archaic silence, passing miles of wooded banks and listening to the water and the songs of red-winged blackbirds. I land on the Arkansas bank and go walking in the woods. They seem deep and mysterious, like the original forests described by Mississippi writer William Alexander Percy: "The water-oak, the pecan, the cypress and the sweet gum . . . ash and elm, walnut and maple. . . . They grew to enormous heights, with vast trunks and limbs, and between them spread a chaos of vines and cane and brush. . . . A still country it must have been then, ankle deep in water, mostly in shadow, with mere flickers of sunshine, . . . motey and yellow and thick like syrup."

But half a mile back from the river is a slash of hard light, and the forest ends. A huge embankment rises, its steep grassy banks smooth as lawn, its top almost as high as the trees. It stretches out of sight to north and south. It is like coming on a strange vast construction left over from another civilization, some despot's fortress. On the far side of it the forest has been replaced by fields. It's the levee.

The Mississippi levee is a great monument to the power of engineering, money and the determination to overcome a natural force. The first levees were built around New Orleans in 1718, and the system has been raised and lengthened constantly ever since. Today it is astonishing. From Cape Girardeau, Missouri, to the sea, the levee of the Lower Mississippi runs for 2,203 miles on both sides of the main river and its tributaries. It stands an average of 25 feet above the land.

But the levee is built back from the water's edge, cloaked in a strip of trees, so at a glance the river looks natural. It isn't. In Dickens' day the river was festooned with snags—old trees jammed in the bottom, lying low to stab a passing boat—and many of its tributaries were blocked by huge logjams built up over the centuries. Ships made for the purpose pulled the snags like so many teeth, and dynamite and other ships cleared logjams. The low muddy banks he saw have been replaced not just with levees but also with concrete. In 1927, after repeated floods proved that raising levees higher and higher wouldn't necessarily save the land, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began to stabilize the bank with huge mats of willows, called revetment, which later became mattresses of wire-linked concrete slabs. The Corps also built dikes—long, low barriers that jut out from the shore—to channel water into the center of the stream to try to make the river dredge its own bed deep enough for barges in low water. In the lower river the Corps built several controversial outlets for high water, called floodways, where floods could be turned inland to protect cities, and cut channels across the tightest loops in the river's meanders

Michael Parfit has long been drawn to the river, where he has walked the levees, driven the roads, and flown his plane; now, a small boat offers a new view.

Philip Gould

The Mississippi imposes its own order on Man's use of the land. Beyond the waiting barges are fields that were laid out in long, narrow ribbons so each grower had access to the river, then the lifeline to the markets.

to shorten it and speed high water to the Gulf of Mexico.

Mile 702.9: Finley Bar Light. I embark again upon the river, looking for that old peace. But around the next bend a crop duster roars up from behind the trees, makes an abrupt turn over the water as if it had forgotten its wallet, and heads back. Again and again it rises, turns, and goes back, weaving its chemical blanket behind the wall.

As the wall was built over the years, people came to live under its protection. They tore down the forest and planted cotton, and the floodplain of the Mississippi became the expanse of farmland known as the Mississippi Delta.

The Delta—in its largest definition—covers 35,000 square miles from southern Illinois to the Gulf of Mexico. It's made up of 219 counties in seven states; 8.3 million people live in it. I have flown over most of the Delta; from above, the river's tracks are visible all over it. Mile after mile its rich earth looks finger-painted by the strokes of a giant, the giant river that used to emerge almost every year, as William Alexander Percy wrote, to "vex and sweeten the land it has made."

But the levee and the revetment cage the giant, or appear to. And no one but birds and an occasional lightplane pilot notices the long sweep of the river's indelible script. What the river has written in the mud again and again is simple: "Someday soon . . ."

Mile 652: Friars Point. A day later I cross the levee into the town of Friars Point. Behind me everything disappears: my raft, the forest, the towboats, the birdsong, the great river. I step into the Delta—and the other story.

"When we in recession down here," says Robert Hirsberg, proprietor of Hirsberg's Drug Store, "we in good times." Hirsberg is 58 years old, with steel-gray hair; genial with an edge. As I talk to him, people come in and buy small things—a comb, a paper bag of quinine tablets—and he writes down the amounts on loose-leaf sheets. "We're primarily a credit town here," he says. Hirsberg's white. His customers are mostly black.

The store is piled high with tools, clothes, baseballs, pipe, ammunition. "Old man came in here once years ago," Hirsberg says. "He looked around and said, 'You got everything a poor nigger needs.' "

I have been outside the levee all up and down this river. I came here by car and plane long before I embarked upon the water. All the people I met were wonderfully friendly. Both black and white opened their arms. I wondered if the whites embraced the Northern stranger because they wanted desperately to persuade someone of old beliefs they weren't too sure of themselves, and if the blacks wanted to share their pride in how they had survived. But it probably had more to do with the fact

that people in pain are often warm to anyone who listens, and these people are hurting, all of them. Right down the middle of their lives is gouged a terrible wound.

In Greenville I once spent an evening talking with a middle-aged river man about life on towboats. He was articulate and informed. But he ended his observations with a lament about life outside the levee. "Everybody knows what the problem here is," he said. "It's the black folks." Again and again white people repeated the same message, many immediately after I met them, as if some urgency drove them to challenge me right away. Few used the genteel phrase; I had not expected to become so familiar with the word "nigger."

Hirsberg had everything a poor man needed, except some way to help him not be poor. Friars Point is on the river edge of Tunica County, Mississippi, the poorest county in the Delta: 52.8 percent of its people are defined as below the poverty line. The Delta region is so poor that it is routinely described as a Third World country in the heart of America; in 1985 the per capita annual income was more than $4,000 below the average American income; in 1988 the unemployment rate for rural Delta counties averaged 8.87 percent; the nation's at the time, 5.5 percent.

There were signs in windows at Friars Point. "Jesus is Lord." "Danger: VD Epidemic in this County." "No selling cocaine here." In an antique store a fan murmured and a clock ticked and a shotgun stood in a corner. There I got a glimpse of the way this poverty feeds upon itself. "The minimum wage has really hurt the Delta," said the proprietor. "There are a lot of people here who are not worth the minimum wage."

The attitude was almost intentionally blind to the history that made it. Like someone denying the Nazi holocaust, the man went on to tell me that there had been very little slavery here. I already knew that wasn't true. In 1850, some 70 percent of the population of Tunica County was enslaved. All down my river route the story was the same: Coahoma County, 50 percent; Bolivar, 85 percent; Washington, 93 percent; Warren, 67 percent; Jefferson, 80 percent; Adams, 77 percent; Wilkinson, 78 percent.

Philip Gould

Only the grassy levee defends the gates of an old plantation from the muscular river that lies beyond.

A dark wall of rain snuffs the sun

Most African-American families who worked here went North after sharecropping faded in the 1950s. "Friars Point's probably bigger than it's ever been," Hirsberg said. "But there's nothing in the country anymore."

Nothing but little white churches in fields, and memories:

"And we now inquire," wrote Louisianan John Fletcher in 1852 in a long, learned treatise defending slavery, "what course of treatment will you propose, as the most practical, to elevate such a race to civilization? It appears to us God has decided that slavery is the most effectual."

"A preacher named Whitfield buyed us," a former slave named Mattie Curtis told an interviewer from the Federal Writers Project sometime in the 1930s. "[He] was supposed to be good, but . . . I seen him whip my mammy with all the clothes off her back. He'd buck her down on a barrel and beat the blood out of her. . . . The folks around there would whip in the backyard, but Marse Whitfield would have the barrel carried in his parlor for the beating."

Mile 628: Jackson Point Cut Off. I cross the levee, back into the other story. I drive hard down the river, the motor roaring. On the slick water, swirls of current kick the little boat around. A huge cloud grows on the near horizon, and when I shut down to drift, there's a grunt of thunder.

The storm begins with extraordinary light. Bent through the edge of the rain, the last sunlight turns everything gold and glorious against a dark wall in the sky. Then the wall snuffs the sun and crashes over me. Rain slashes the boat, and lightning hits the opposite shore. Wind shoves

John Hudick, Ford Quality Surveillance Inspector

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Michael Parfit

Mark Martin's family has made its living from the river for three generations now, and Martin is still able to bring in a good catch of catfish. But his father says, "That ol' river's not what it used to be."

me west, sideways across the river. I crank up the motor and drive into the wind for shelter on the lee side.

The bank is all Corps revetment, a matrix of concrete and steel wires. But the river's been working on this stretch, and the mat is busted up. Blocks have been heaved upright, and the thick wire that holds them together is bent and broken. Below this carnage, in the lee of the wind, the river laps innocently against the mud.

Rain hisses on the water, and kicks up a low silver haze. My tent is pitched across the forward two-thirds of the boat, so I hunker down in it to wait out the storm. But the rain hits so hard the tent leaks, and water runs down my neck.

The story of the raising of the Mississippi levees is accompanied by stories of floods. "[Y]ear by year we have seen the river rising higher," wrote Delta farmer Lyle Saxon after the great flood of 1927, "always higher than the levees that rise to combat its flood stage." Floods on the Mississippi happen an average of once every seven years, but the huge ones come less often. The greatest recorded floods happened in 1882, 1927 and 1973. Their stories have been told in many ways by many people, but usually in terms of violence—the river was a "wounded wild beast," or a "son of perdition." To Faulkner, describing the flood of 1927, "the river was now doing what it liked to do, had waited patiently the ten years in order to do, as a mule will work for you ten years for the privilege of kicking you once." In 1927 Lyle Saxon was more succinct: "The old Devil river has finished us."

The present system of revetment, cutoffs, dikes, floodways and even higher levees is designed around a hypothetical deluge bigger than anything so far recorded, called the "Project Flood." In 1973 this Corps of Engineers policy was tested by the greatest flood since 1927. Damage up and down the river was almost $1.2 billion. However, wrote James Tuttle, chief of the Water Control Division of the Corps' Mississippi River Commission, in a paper later, "the Mississippi River and Tributaries Project performed well. No federal levees were crevassed on the Lower Mississippi River and other features . . . performed satisfactorily . . . total damages prevented by projects amounted to near $15 billion." It sounded as if the Corps was at last getting a rope on the mule.

One small thing mars that optimism, as a few hydrologists skeptical of Corps projects like to point out. The 1973 flood reached the third highest stage ever recorded in Vicksburg, but, as Tuttle wrote in his paper, "major discharge records were set only . . . above the Missouri River confluence." The question is whether all these tricks to confine it and shunt it around, combined with the human tendency to pave more land and cut more forests, and the accumulation of sediment between those

How we see it.

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Both: Philip Gould

Below New Orleans, watercraft are the best—sometimes the only—means of transport. Here, one of the last of the "marsh villages." Land at the Mississippi's mouth is vanishing, a side effect of river development projects.

confining walls, actually allowed the river to make a bigger flood with less water. If this is the case, is it possible that even the Project Flood could be exceeded?

"People in this valley get a sense everything is totally controlled," Tuttle told me once when I visited him in Vicksburg. "That's a false sense of security. We haven't seen anything yet in this valley as to what this river can do. We're not in control of anything."

"And I tell the world the water/Done struck through this town," wrote blues singer Charlie Patton. "Lord, the whole round country, lord/River is overflowed."

"For we never have the river 'off our mind,'" wrote Lyle Saxon, "those of us who live behind the levees. Every year we work and fear . . . ."

Mile 590: Rosedale, Mississippi. Down this whole long river, there is almost nowhere to buy gas for the outboard. I stop in Rosedale and get a ride to a gas station from a pleasant young man who works at a boat dock there. As we drive across the levee, he, like so many others, has that urgency to bring his trouble out in the open right away. "You want to be careful," he says. "When a stranger comes into town these young black guys get their heads up." It's as if he's talking about horses.

Back at the dock the men are having lunch, and whether by rule, habit or choice, they eat in segregated rooms. In a shack with a table, half a dozen black men laugh and shout and enjoy their break. In a comfortable big room with a pop machine and a couch, four white men sit in a glum silence, watching TV. They seem subdued, as if trapped by their own superiority.

Mile 581: The mouth of the Arkansas River. Long ago I came out here jug fishing with a young commercial fisherman named Mark Martin. The jugs were bleach bottles anchored by railroad spikes. They emerged from mist along the willows like gurgling plastic ducks, and long catfish came up, squirming like snakes. Mark's grandfather used to live on Big Island inside the levee. He was a Church of Christ minister, he killed seven men, and he made famous bootleg whisky from river water aged in oak barrels buried in river sand. Mark's father used to swim across the river from Big Island to Rosedale just for fun. "That ol' river's not what it used to be," his father told me once. "It was crooked. It was slower. All that rock and revetment, they made it swiffer."

Mark was as close to Huck Finn as I got—Huck Finn all grown up, with no territories to light out for, with shaggy hair and yellow slickers, a cigarette in his mouth as he pulled the line, and a calm and open wariness in his blue eyes. "I'd like to catch a big one," he said to his young partner, Timmy. "I'd like to catch *the* big one."

"You're after that Loch Ness monster," Timmy said.

"They seen one up in Arkansas," Mark said.

"Day I see him," Timmy said, "be my last day out here."

Mark Martin was like Huck Finn in another way—after all, Twain's story was about slavery as well as the river. Inside the levee, Mark did not carry the burden of the racial animosity I found in so many other places. Like Huck, he didn't seem conscious of this freedom; it was natural. "We got a colored mayor," he said to me as the fog burned off. "I guess he's one of the best mayors we ever had."

Shotgun shacks are no longer common, but the Delta region continues to be one of the nation's poorest.

Mile 540: Greenville, Mississippi. I cross the levee not far from where it broke in 1927 and let the river strike through town. Back in the other story, I stand in the huge service bay of the Greenville John Deere tractor dealership, listening to Eddie Cusic, a graying black man, sing the blues. The blues was born in the Delta, but it isn't the music of the new generation here, so it's kept alive by people like Malcolm Walls of Greenville, who organizes an annual blues festival and a tour called the Delta Bluesmobile, here to perform for a group of young Mississippi community leaders—most of them white.

It is a good place to hear the blues; a cavernous space with concrete floors, enormous tractors, and people sitting on metal folding chairs and pickup trucks. The music is wonderful: the mean, lonely yowl of the blues harp and the deep old voices. In the middle of it a young black man named John Horhn gives a short speech.

"It is astonishing," he says, "to think of this Delta soil having spawned this art. This land is a land of yin and yang, contradictions and extremes: riches and poverty, squalor and beauty, black and white. Things tend to be extreme here, but the music brings people together."

Behind the levee the black people I talked to did not express anger or bitterness. Like Horhn, many tended to look for reconciliation. After Mike Espy gained a lot of white votes in being elected to his second term as the first black Congressman from Mississippi since Reconstruction, a black county supervisor talked wryly to a reporter about why whites came to vote for him. "They were afraid," he says, "that once we got in position, we would treat them like they treated us. They see now that we try to treat everyone the same." It is as if a lot of the African-Americans have the grace of pride in their survival, but many whites have only the long undertow of shame.

Even when I went to visit one of the leading black organizations in the Delta, MACE (Mississippi Action for Community Education), the only man who seemed angry about the black predicament, Michael Sayer, was a white organizer from New York.

"We have two separate societies here," he said. "The stigma of Dred Scott has not been abandoned. Whites en masse have left the public schools. In the private schools, white kids internalize white skin privilege. Their very existence teaches it. It is deep in their culture."

Once I met a young white man on a revetment beach near Mayersville—a town whose mayor, Unita Blackwell, has twice been president of the National Conference of Black Mayors. When Blackwell was a child, she told me once, young black men were trained never to look a white person in the eye. Part of the civil rights movement, she said, was unlearning those things. "We was blundering through trying to become citizens of these United States," she said. I have been several times to Mayersville, a village of about 500, mostly black, full of happy children's voices. Everyone I saw there looked me in the eye.

But the young white man didn't. He was a polite 16-year-old and talked of his school's winning football teams.

"Is it a private school?" I asked.

"Oh, yeah," he said.

"Why do you go to private school?"

He didn't look at me. "I hate niggers," he said.

"Fear is a part of the whites' life," Sayer said. "Fear is how you get people to internalize the necessity of separation."

What is this fear? Many of the whites I met on the river seemed afraid—not just of the sharply defined violence that marks racial tensions in many cities both North and South, but of something less clear. Maybe it was uncertainty itself: a sense that all this power, which was oppressed for centuries and is still subdued, cannot be controlled forever.

Black and white, a story of survival and nervousness

After listening to the blues, I walk on the dirt road along the top of the levee at Greenville. On one side of the levee life is black and white, a story of survival and nervousness. On the other side the river moves, brown, swift, unpredictable, enormous, always murmuring "Someday soon . . ."

Mile 504.5: Sara Island Light. Half a day downstream of Greenville I catch up to a houseboat in the middle of the current. Three men are on board. I come up close, and they invite me in. I tie on and climb aboard as they motor along. They're from Missouri, and they've been on the river for a week, in a pontoon boat named after two wives. They have two outboard motors on the back, but

they're having a hard time with their big old Evinrude. They put on coffee for me and talk about their trip and their motor. Then we go around a bend and here's a big tow, four barges wide, coming straight at us.

"Ah," I say. "Um." But the driver is confident. He looks at the tow and drives on. The coffeepot starts to gurgle.

A little later he tries to start his big engine. It doesn't start. We get closer to the tow. In early August 1991, a sailboat with an Iowa man on it went under the bow of a tow up at about Mile 594, near Rosedale. They found the man's body nine miles downstream. "He just couldn't decide which way to go," a river man told me.

The three men fool with their motor. We race downstream, and there stands the tow. A mile. A half a mile. A few hundred yards. The leading barges are empty and tall, prancing in place like a wall of bay horses, the river boiling at their iron feet, a red-and-white flag on their backs. They bear down. These guys look like they know what they're doing, but I don't think they do.

"Ahh," I observe, and, "Say . . . maybe you should . . ." Still they fiddle mildly with the big engine. They have plenty of power in the little one to get out of the way, but they don't use it.

What to say? An image, bright as lightning, flashes in my head: my two children, alone.

Thanks, gents, maybe I'll just mosey along. I untie, crank up my little engine and get the hell out of there. Then I hear it, the one and only time on the river: the whistle of a towboat. It is a great howl of anger and authority and dismay.

It's as if the man steering the houseboat suddenly remembers his name. The houseboat turns and flees, and just makes it.

Behind the tow I count 20 heaps of rolling brown water streaked with foam.

Mile 317.6: Black Hawk Bend Light. A huge sign stands on the bank: "WARNING: DANGEROUS DRAW. ONE MILE—WEST BANK." Here it is, a place that nags at the future with promises of chaos: the place where the Corps has set up its most formidable array of steel and concrete against the natural urge of the river.

The silt falls out, the river sidles away

As a geological force, a river like the Mississippi does not like to stay in its bed. In the lowland near the mouth it slows down, and the great burden of silt begins to fall out. The silt builds up the bed, and the river wants to sidle away. Today the bed between here and the mouth is built up, and the river wants to take a shorter, easier route, down the course of a smaller branch called the Atchafalaya.

The way down the Atchafalaya was once blocked by a huge logjam. But when the logs were removed in the 19th century, more and more of the water started to go down the shorter route. Between 1955 and 1959 the Corps built a structure called Old River Control to make sure no more than 30 percent of the Mississippi turned right at the Atchafalaya. In 1973 that structure was nearly destroyed by the flood, so the Corps rebuilt it and added a second channel and set of gates. Today a lock, a power plant, the new gates and other structures oppose the river's desire. Hydrologists debate over whether this will stand against what the river wants for as long as New Orleans wants the river.

"They can't haul enough rock out of Kentucky to keep that river from going where it wants to go," a towboat operator once told me. "Ultimately," two hydrologists wrote in a paper, "the forces which move hundreds of millions of tons of silt and half a trillion tons of water annually . . . are too powerful to contain." But to Jim Tuttle of the Corps it is simply a matter of resolve—and money. To him it is possible the structures may be washed away by a great flood, but it should also be possible to put the river back in its channel. "As long as it is in the national interest that the river goes past New Orleans, it will," he said. "It depends on Congress; it would take some bucks."

I have stood on the top of Old River Control's Auxiliary Structure at high water and listened to the river thunder at the gates. But today the water's low, and I just walk up the levee and look at a map of the river etched on a huge Plexiglas sheet that stands upright near the power plant. The map has little sketches of Huck Finn and river

In the Delta, threat of high water is everpresent; this venerable Mississippi mansion succumbed in 1983.

Army engineers have built a massive control system but admit that a megaflood would still displace millions.

industry, but you can see right through it — the real thing, brown and strong. It's a pretty juxtaposition, but here and there beside the map feathers are plastered on the wet concrete: the remains of birds that crashed into the map.

Mile 266: Point Coupee. "So you're going to the end of the world," says a man named Joe. I've crossed the levee and got another ride for fuel in a pickup from Joe, who's fascinated with my journey.

"What do you mean?"

"Here, let me show you the end of the world," he says. He pulls out a highway map and follows the river south out of New Orleans with a cracked finger. He taps the map at the mouth of the river.

"There!" he says in triumph. "I been there once."

At dusk I tie up to the ferry landing near New Roads, Louisiana, where a year ago I spent time with a wonderful black family whose nearly blind daughter was an accomplished and published poet. Now I am met here by a white artist who creates dramatic paintings of environmental degradation. To me her strongest piece of work, based on a real incident, is a painting of her son sitting in the garden while a crop duster sprays chemical dust in his face. She and her husband have offered to put me up for the night. But when she meets me at the bank she looks scared. "I think we're going to run out of gas," she says.

"Could you drive?" she says. I do. We cross the levee.

Nathan Benn/Woodfin Camp

The gas station is about ten miles away, through the black side of town. I drive slowly, while the car coughs and stammers, through the same part of town where I was so cordially received a year ago. She's scared to death.

"Maybe it'll stop here," she says. "That's my cleaning woman's house. We can talk to her." But the car keeps going. We pass a black bar. "There's people killed there all the time," she says. In darkness we pass among big trees and small houses. The gas station is still a long way away. The car coughs again. She looks over at me and says, "Do you have a pistol?"

Mile 253: Profit Island Light. Ships, derricks, and flames that blossom from stacks in the treetops; here comes Baton Rouge. When I get fuel, a young man at the dock says, "Here's something for your story: You know what the next stretch of river's called? 'Cancer Alley.' "

Traveling down "the nation's toxic hotspot"

In Baton Rouge I talk to John Liebman, who brought a 78-foot ship called the *Beluga* down the Mississippi in 1988 with a Greenpeace crew, plugging outlets as they went. The Greenpeace report, "We All Live Downstream," describes the next 150 miles as "the nation's toxic hotspot." In 1987, the Environmental Protection Agency reported, 196 million pounds of toxic chemicals were dumped in the river between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. "The river is being killed," Liebman says. "And in the process so are we."

"The Greenpeace report was not science," says Richard Kleiner, a spokesman for the Louisiana Chemical Association. A little later he says, "Every major company in Louisiana is on the road to major emission reduction. Since 1987 effluents are down about 50 percent." He takes me to see the Dow Chemical plant on the river, where we talk to a senior environmental specialist. Dow Chemical is a clean, well-regulated place, with lights and wind socks all over the place to warn of, locate and manage spills, and with a huge, swift canal of river water.

"We make everything," the specialist says with a smile, "and make it into everything else." In 1970, the specialist says, the plant dumped 22,000 pounds per day of organic chemical waste into the river; now that has been reduced to 40 pounds a day. If we want everything chemistry gives us, it's a necessary evil.

I go to a meeting of an organization called LEAN—Louisiana Environmental Action Network. There I run into an activist named Linda King, who thinks things like the Dow Chemical plant are more evil than necessary. King is the founder and executive director of the Environmental Health Network, which addresses a powerful, very real fear: that environmental degradation destroys health as well as beauty. At the meeting, people talk about unexplained rashes, headaches and cancer.

"It is deplorable that you have to ask those questions,"

Jerry Stebbins

South of Baton Rouge, the night is illuminated by a phalanx of giant petrochemical plants. Despite cleanup efforts, critics say toxic chemicals being dumped into the river are causing major health problems in the area.

King tells a man whose home is near a toxic dump. " 'Has my child been damaged? Can we sell our house?' If you feel your quality of life has been damaged, fight like hell, and I'll help you."

The stories are terrible: children consumed by disease; parents, brothers and sisters dying. "For residents of these towns along Louisiana's 'Chemical Corridor' . . . the connection between pollution and health problems could hardly be more clear," reported the 1991-92 Green Index. But the figures are ambiguous. Though lung cancer is higher in the alley, and though rates for some other cancers have been shown to be higher in populations that use the Mississippi for drinking-water supply, the many factors that may be part of the statistics make firm conclusions almost impossible. "No one's ever going to prove the cancer rate in Louisiana is connected to the environment," Paul Templet, former head of the state's Department of Environmental Quality, told the LEAN audience. And without proof, it all comes back to opinion. "The organic loading on the Mississippi River," said the environmental specialist at Dow, "is not a threat to anybody."

Mile 209: Plaquemine Light. I move through a crazy landscape marked by short stretches of pastoral river followed by looming industry—the roar of refinery towers burning orange flame, the deep rumble of freighters moving fast, rolling up huge wakes with barely a scuff of white at their bows. This 150-mile-long port is an exciting place. It's wealth and adventure on the move; rust-bellied ships from around the world. The *Maritime Pearl,* Singapore; the *Fastnes,* Manila; the *Castillo de Javier,* Valencia.

On a mud-and-sand beach Donna Friedley and Edgar Cedotal are swimming with a whole bunch of children. To the north is Triad Chemical; to the south is a Texaco refinery. "Lot of people are scared to swim," Edgar says. "But people eat fish out of it and *they* ain't dead." The kids dive and frolic.

Mile 156: Rich Bend. The mile markers pass. I float through one of the strangest regions of this river, where grand old plantation homes stand next to petrochemical plants, one after another. Belle Helene: Shell Chemical. Tezcuco: Star Refinery. The Homestead: Exxon. Doric columns and cracking towers. This setting of the elegant Southern past against modern industry has been called a terrible juxtaposition; all that noble beauty against the fumes and noise of the refineries. But it doesn't look like that to me. The plantations were built on slavery, another generation's necessary evil. So this looks to me like the place where the two stories of the river collide like two fires meeting on a ridge, and burn together.

Cancer Alley is marked by great wealth and terrible poverty. The immensely profitable industries along its banks are granted immunity from many taxes to entice them to this place, so the schools that should be thriving here struggle. Many plants are built on the edges of black communities. Yet most of the employees are white and go home to bright, white suburbs miles away.

"Slavery was a case of exploitation for short-term gains," said Florence Robinson when I talked to her in Baton

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Rouge. Her town is surrounded by two EPA Superfund toxic-waste sites, a waste-treatment facility and several petrochemical plants. "I think that's what's going on now."

"They're taking something our people worked for for so many years," said Rose Jackson, who lives in a tiny community downriver next to a waste-disposal site. "They're taking their property values. They're taking their health. They're putting these people back into slavery time."

San Francisco Plantation: Marathon Oil. Destrehan Plantation: Shell Oil.

Mile 44.9: Bohemia Light. Past New Orleans, another storm drives up hard from the south, blowing fire and steam in ragged streamers from stacks. Soaked, I climb on a docked ship with yellow on its deck—it hauls sulfur from rigs in the Gulf. A black man takes me below to get directions to the nearest town. In the galley four men, black and white, are playing poker. Watching them I have a great sense of relief, and it takes a minute to realize why. It's because the pressure's off: these guys are colleagues and act like it. For almost the first time since Memphis, color doesn't matter.

Later, in a gap between storms, I race downstream and remember the black fisherman on the bank of the Wolf River, right back at the beginning. It was amazing how much he'd scared me, just because of what the white man had said about the gun. But I hadn't wanted to shoot him, so I'd broken the spell and talked to him. His name was W. J. Ross, and he worked at a concrete plant in Memphis. "I think the fish gone on vacation," he said, and he grinned at me. "Good luck," he said, and I returned the wish, and so a little friendship passed, and with it hope.

Mile 0: Head of Passes. I come at last to the end of the world. Wind whips in off the Gulf of Mexico. I pound through four-foot waves. I cross the broad rough reach of Head of Passes, where the river divides to distribute itself into the Gulf. I choose one of the arms, South Pass, for the last 20 miles. Willow trees and roseau cane lie low on my horizon, but there is less of that than there used to be. At the mouth of the Mississippi the land is disappearing.

It took a while for even the people who live here to see it. Then, almost suddenly, it became apparent something huge was happening. The floating marshes were going. The low grasslands were going. The willow forests were going. The land was vanishing.

"We ran cattle where there's water now," said a man who grew up here. "None of us realized we were losing it as quick as we was." Between 1956 and 1978 the land was disappearing at up to 40 square miles a year. Although the rate has slowed in recent years, that's partly because the most fragile wetlands are already gone.

Once I flew over this landscape with an official from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, looking at a map made just a few years before. "All this is gone," he said, waving his hand like a god over hundreds of square miles of land on the map. Out the window it was sea.

What happened? Like a god we raised a hand and were careless where it fell. We didn't pay enough attention to the mud. Back up the river the sediment that falls out in the channels narrowed by the levees raises both the bed and the floods, and makes the river want to go down the Atchafalaya. Here our efforts to get rid of the sediment have cost us the land.

Such a simple thing. In the 19th century the great barrier to shipping on the Mississippi was the silt that built up at the mouth, but a man named James B. Eads thought of building jetties there to funnel the river into deep water before it slowed enough to drop its load. The government didn't believe him, but he built the jetties on speculation, and they worked—except that after that the silt didn't replenish the land the way it had done for

Jerry Stebbins

At sunset, back upstream in the birthplace of the blues, a family takes its ease on the Memphis riverfront.

millennia. Nobody noticed at first, but after a while that loss, and channels cut by oil drillers, doomed the land.

There are attempts to get it back. When I went through a lock one night to find a place to sleep, I noticed that the lock doors weren't closed. They were left open a foot, letting a gentle stream of water through. "We're doing our part to try to build the land back," said the lockmaster. The Corps, the state and other agencies are building new outlets to distribute silt once more, and new laws limit the construction of canals. But still it feels like riding that houseboat down at the thundering wall of the big tow, pretending we know what we're doing.

Mile minus 15: The mouth of the Mississippi. I reach the end of my journey at sunset. At the mouth of the Mississippi a bell tolls on a buoy, the sea swell lifts me, and the sun goes down over the dwindling land.

At the end of the world the two stories of the river are one. Once this nation had accepted slavery, and we continue to pay the price. But each generation has its opportunities for shame, and the way we treat our great river and our Earth may be ours. We don't reckon the price of chemicals or of levees and a channel, in just the same way the generation of 1845 didn't reckon the human cost of cotton.

Channeled, poisoned, restless, the Mississippi River is still a symbol. It represents our whole relationship to the planet. We have asserted control, but we're uneasy. Like many white people in the Delta, we're trapped by the lie of domination. We fear what we have oppressed; we know that all this power cannot be controlled forever.

What makes us nervous? Nothing obvious. Blacks in the Delta aren't going to rise in force, but whites still look over their shoulders. The world isn't going to explode tomorrow because of what we do to it, but we know something's wrong. Ozone? Warming? What else will come on as softly as the loss of land at the river's mouth? So we build barriers of iron and attitude. Give me a wall of concrete; give me a gate of steel; give me a levee 25 feet high! Give me a pistol.

And the river swirls against the revetment and murmurs low, "Someday soon . . ."

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SONY

By Edwards Park

A special treat awaits zoophiles in Washington

The National Zoo's new Amazonia exhibit packs them in, with rain forest plants and creatures, and staff biologists on hand to explain them all

Zoos have changed. The idea of simply putting strange creatures on display for people to stare at is as dead as the ancient Egyptians who were among the first to do it. All through the 20th century animals have been appearing in environments that have become ever more spacious and natural. At the Smithsonian's National Zoological Park, in Washington D.C., an exhibit has opened where the environment itself is the star.

It's called "Amazonia." It opened in November, the culmination of seven years of planning and building, financed by the U.S. Government to the tune of $12 million. It's a partial realization of Zoo director Michael H. Robinson's long-held dream of a BioPark: "It is *not* a habitat zoo, but an attempt to link together the whole world of nature, of plants and animals of all kinds, the interaction of humans with all other life-forms in all ways, in a holistic biological approach."

For the Zoo's first major venture toward this vision, Mike chose to encapsulate a highly endangered piece of our planet: the Amazon rain forest. This, he felt, would not only be a grand show, but would demonstrate the staggering loss to our world if its richest natural environment—"the Fort Knox of biology," as he calls it—continues to be destroyed at today's frightening pace.

And so, in the most extensive complex to be built at the National Zoo in a half-century, a bit of the Amazon rain forest now flourishes, entertains and teaches. Its visitors feel the physical blow of heat and dampness, and sense the sounds and smells of a jungle with all its burgeoning life.

Signs and banners point the way to this large but unobtrusive building, just downhill from the Mane Restaurant and not far from the spectacled bears' enclosure. Near the entrance, a poster introduces "Dr. Brasil," a fictitious Amazonian biologist with an exotic "life history," whose scientific domain you're about to enter. He's out in the field, it says here, but he's delighted to have visitors look over this section of rain forest and visit his lab, where his "graduate students" (in reality, staff biologists and volunteers) are always eager to explain and demonstrate ongoing projects.

At the entrance stands a rough wooden pier with rope-bound pilings. I watched too many people plunge through blindly without becoming aware of this dock and its message: that it is a landing, a place for stepping ashore from the great Amazon River.

Once inside, the illusion is clarified. You are walking along a village dock where fishnets lie drying and a dugout canoe is drawn up. The river is in flood. A freshet from the heights above ends in a cascade that crashes into the water beside you, coming down right over your head. Ripples from this waterfall lap around three mighty tree trunks and against the stern of another dugout beached just to your left.

You move into a darkened region, evoking the deep forest. Murals on your right show the tremendous width of the great river—35 miles in places and 250 miles at its mouth. The gloomy view indicates a cloudy day, but riverside shacks on stilts catch a shaft of sunlight.

To your left is an underwater view. Small freshwater fish from the Amazon—various tetras and silver dollars, an armored catfish and arowana—glide sedately. Their huge tanks form a transparent wall beside your path. And what aquatic creatures do not appear in the flesh are depicted. A sculpture shows the pinkish Amazon River dolphin, or boto, which blushes in times of stress. Beside it is a mural of manatees, river otters, a capybara, a caiman—a tropical American crocodilian—and birds: an anhinga, a parrot.

Either real-life curator Jaren Horsley or one of Dr. Brasil's graduate students (they all wear teal green T-shirts) told me that the total number of gallons in Amazonia's freshwater fish tanks and life-support system is about 90,000—more than any other freshwater aquarium the staff knows of.

Your "jungle trail" winds to Dr. Brasil's open-walled lab. The work is laid out for you to see. Someone is studying a computer readout of the power field surrounding a little black Amazonian electric fish. There it is in its tank, and a student is on hand to explain it.

Up the stairs to the rain forest

Youthful biologists could spend a profitable hour in Dr. Brasil's lab, but the lure of Amazonia's "Habitat" draws everyone upstairs. As you ascend, you meet a blanket of warmth and humidity. By the time you reach the floor of the rain forest your coat or sweater is probably off. The temperature hovers around 82 degrees Fahrenheit. It drops to the low 70s at night. Humidity stays at about 80 percent during the day. Even as you pause and look around, a hidden humidifier turns on silently, and a fine mist swirls about you.

When I first stood at the top of the stairs, the entrance to Amazonia's actual rain forest, it was that mysterious mist, and the smells of new life mixed with old rot, that suddenly awoke my own distant memories of jungle. For a moment I was back at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute on Barro Colorado Island in Gatun Lake, Panama. And here I was again on the wet coast of northern Queensland, Australia. And here, after 50 years, I seemed to return to New Guinea. Amazonia is even real enough to be damp underfoot. And while the concrete walk was abuilding, two bright

Introduced into Amazonia, an iguana showed typical behavior by investigating surroundings with tongue.

Photographs by Jessie Cohen

young staff people, Vince Rico and Ed Smith, came up with the idea of etching it with imprints of leaves and plants that would certainly clutter a jungle path.

The place is richly green, with shafts of sunlight when there is sunlight, or a blanket of gloom when the outside is cloudy. "It will be totally green in five or six years, when the vines get hold of all the concrete piers," Ric Hider, Amazonia's botanist, told me.

Those concrete structural surfaces aren't all that's artificial. A giant kapok tree, buttressed by huge gray external roots, rises right before the entrance. Its great trunk disappears into the canopy of upper leaves, some 40 feet overhead. When I met the tree (opposite), I immediately asked how in the world this monster was shipped to Washington from the tropics. My guide beamed happily at me. "We made this baby out of fiberglass. Our mold came from a kapok tree in Panama."

So much for Joyce Kilmer. This tree—not made by God—is such an exact replica that it was instantly accepted by the monkeys that have been released in the Habitat. The bark is rubbed away from the top of one root, and where the roots are sawed to make room for the path, wood texture shows. Up on the great trunk, bark has split unevenly in a few places. And if you look up at those splits you'll notice the flutter of nearby leaves stirring. Those natural-looking breaks in the bark are vents for the heating and air-conditioning system.

A small kapok tree stands beside the big fake. This little one is real. It has thorns growing from the trunk that will disappear with age. I know that the thorns are real, for I leaned against them by accident.

Just behind the fake tree stands the large mahogany tree that made the newspapers when it was being lowered through the roof by a crane. It's real, growing beautifully. But other large kapoks, rising from the water at the entrance, are also fiberglass. And the big brown termite nest, a little farther along the path, is a phony. You just can't tell the difference around here.

Dr. Brasil's "notebook," propped open at appropriate pages, tells you about the endless death and growth of the rain forest, the burgeoning species of diversified plants and animals—more life per square inch than in any other place on Earth. We're told that the rain forest produces many of our medicines. "Plants and animals battle their predators and competitors with chemical warfare—and we reap the benefits." But not always. The dart-poison frog's skin toxin makes a wonderful killing device for Indian blowguns. It'll paralyze a deer in minutes (SMITHSONIAN, January 1989).

The Zoo's vest-pocket Amazonia holds 358 species of plant, including some spectacular orchids and a mat of vines that took hold of the sphagnum moss on one looming wall and succeeded in covering the masonry.

The peripatetic Edwards Park reports on all Smithsonian matters around the Mall and beyond.

Two-toed sloth climbed around checking out the real estate after its release in a real-life bursera tree.

Male sun bittern's courtship display must have been acceptable, as he and mate began building a nest.

Almost a hundred different kinds of tree are doing just fine here, many with names that strike familiar chords. The place has all the ingredients for a family picnic, what with cashew, guava, avocado and papaya trees offering food, a cocoa tree providing the means to wash it down, a chicle tree for the gumchewers, balsa for the kids to make model planes. If the kapok were real, its pods, split open, would provide fibers used in pillows and mattresses.

The live trees came from Florida, where they've been nursed along for the past few years in preparation for being put on display. The ubiquitous Dr. Brasil has labeled many of them. He may be impossible to see, but he's fun to read. His journal is chatty and offers literary touches that, for a scientist, are positively inspired. He describes epiphytes, those rootless plants that festoon tree branches, "thumbing a ride to the

Fake kapok tree and vines proved irresistible to Goeldi's monkeys; it's their favorite scrambling site.

Flooded forest is the first encounter for visitors to Amazonia; its trees host bromeliads and orchids.

sunlight" of the forest canopy. He tells how a fallen tree allows light to reach the forest floor so that "everything springs to life, racing to fill the gap."

Aquatic life in the Habitat is not a matter of murals. Limpid water, filtered nearby, winds beside the path, and you realize you're looking down into the same tanks, eight feet deep in places, that you passed downstairs. The stream finally tumbles under you, in that cascade at the entrance to the exhibit. Fish abound down there, among them stingrays and the pacu, probably an ancestor of the notorious piranha. The pacu's teeth can crack tough seeds, but it's not interested in meat. Piranhas, of course, are. Maybe later, they'll be released into a special pool.

Above the gleaming water, sun bitterns perch on low branches in absolute stillness. They're almost as hard to see as Dr. Brasil. Other birds dart about the forest canopy, vanishing into it, then reappearing to race off to another part. I'm told that one dark little hummingbird flew downstairs, zipped past the fish tanks, glanced at the mural, paid a brief visit to the lab, then buzzed upstairs again, back to the plants and blossoms.

I've glimpsed the hummingbirds as they sip their nectar at the small red feeders that have been put up for them—doubtless by Dr. Brasil. I've managed to spot a blue-gray tanager and some red-crested cardinals from Brazil. Birders should bring binoculars to the Habitat, for this is no aviary but a piece of raw nature where wildlife is wary.

Mammals? At the time of writing they're not all here, though by the time of reading they will be. The cast of characters includes pygmy marmosets, Goeldi's monkeys, titi monkeys, a two-toed sloth. I arrived early on a cold and rainy morning near Election Day to watch the release of the two titis and found them still sitting warily in their acclimation container, even though Jaren Horsley had opened and secured its sliding door.

Satisfied at last that this was no political dirty trick, the larger, a female, darkly furry with a long, straight tail, inched outside, stood beside the cage, then climbed on top of it. Her small son quickly followed. Mom then tested a long "Tarzan vine"—liana, actually—found it held and proceeded to climb up it beside the big kapok. Son came right behind her—and in a matter of seconds the two were happily swinging away to other branches and boughs, exploring their new world.

On another morning, a couple of the staff were shocked to hear a splash and find that a newly arrived Goeldi's monkey had apparently fallen into the water and pulled itself up on a half-sunken log across the creek. The staff raced off to get a net and save the monkey. But when they got it back to its tree, the little

Entrance through roof for this 40-foot, 16,400-pound mahogany was achieved with help of a 90-foot crane.

critter ambled out on a limb over the water, paused for a moment, then jumped in again. It swam briskly across and explored the other shore. The Amazonia people had planned to put a caiman into the tanks. After that incident, they're doing some rethinking.

I missed watching the release of the sloth. "I wouldn't say it exactly exploded out of the box," reported a biologist. "We just put it in a tree, and very slowly it climbed up." "Want to see it?" asked another. "Come over here; now look up at that clump of sphagnum under the bromeliad. Got it? Now look straight up from it and you'll see another clump. That's the sloth. It looks like a giant Brillo pad."

The release of the green iguana caused a great stir among the birds. They gathered around it, apparently complaining that the neighborhood was going to hell. Their point is well taken. Amazonia exists to preserve and display a complete piece of nature, not merely a population of living creatures within it. So doubtless the birds will lose an egg or two to predatory creatures. On the other hand, zoos don't exist to kill animals but to maintain them, so Amazonia's staff is prepared to save lives when it must.

Visitors leaving the Habitat pass through a pair of doorways with a printed warning that one set should remain closed while the other is open. That way the heat, humidity—and birds—are kept inside.

In the future the exit will lead you into Amazonia's Science Gallery, a spacious, high-ceilinged exhibit hall that's not yet finished and won't be until next year. Visitors who have just been awed by the misty forest world where mighty trees soar to the dense green canopy will meet, in the Gallery, endless "soap operas" of forest life on a small scale. If all goes well, they'll peer at a Lilliputian confrontation of several hundred army ants on the march in some hunting formation, at the tiny insects that dwell in a single jungle thorn, at odd couples in symbiotic partnership, at battles for survival raging in miniature within this crowded population.

Jewel-box displays will show us the small-scale complexity of the forest: gemlike insects, seeds, eggs, feathers, leaves, blossoms—a veritable visit to Tiffany's. At interactive computers, users will conjure up a water bug so huge it catches fish, and baby caimans struggling out of their eggshells.

All that's to come. But at Amazonia's gala opening in November, the great room was already sufficiently finished to welcome guests, including the Brazilian Ambassador. It was a Continental breakfast party, wherein I demonstrated the impossibility of holding coffee in one hand and spreading a bagel with the other. I think all of us who watched the ribbon cut and Amazonia declared open to the public faced this beautiful, thoughtful and vastly important new exhibit with Mike Robinson's words echoing in our heads: "Here is something splendid that should never be allowed to pass." That message was echoed in Cleveland the very next day, where another man-made jungle environment was opened at the Metroparks Zoo.

Later this year an Amazonia computer program, put out by the Computer Curriculum Corporation, will reach out to homes and schools throughout the country. Mike Robinson had a hand in its development; it will use graphics, animation and sound to explore life in the rain forest and will be used in the Gallery.

On the day I visited Amazonia, my path led past a giant fallen tree trunk. Stepping around it as I left, I was suddenly shocked. That dead relic, just outside the display of such burgeoning life, became a sobering reminder of the all too possible future for the real Amazonia. It symbolized the end of what a 10-year-old visitor, writing to Mike Robinson, so rightly called "these enchanted forests."

Swirling mist enveloping the rain forest is an absolute necessity for its humidity-loving plants and animals.

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Director Julie Taymor stands among characters she created for her recent production of *Fool's Fire*, a film based on a short story by Edgar Allan Poe.

The figures—from left, the king, a minister's wife and a minister—are sometimes worn as masks, sometimes manipulated by hands inside the heads, like puppets.

By Miriam Horn

A director who can conjure up magic onstage

Delving ever deeper into the arts of the past, Julie Taymor uses humans, puppets and masks to create illusions that turn reality upside down

In the opera *Oedipus Rex*, Creon, played by Bryn Terfel, wears a "stone" head inspired by Cycladic art.

Fat-bellied and fat-nosed, with a huge fleshy head like a pumpkin left to rot in the field, the king is entertaining his ministers. For the occasion all have stuffed their paunches and double chins into foppish ruffles, waistcoats and bows. One has the long snout and swollen lips of a gasping fish; another's nose and chin are as long as a sea creature's pincers. When at last the king grunts and begins tearing at his meat, his guests grab their forks and knives in gluttonous anticipation. But before they can manage a bite, the pheasant under glass stirs and takes wing, the poached fish begins flopping on its plate, and the roast pig spits the apple from its mouth. And under the banquet table, gleeful at the havoc he has wreaked, sits Hop-Frog, a court jester barely more than three feet tall (p. 64).

Last year when this production of *Fool's Fire* aired on *American Playhouse*, it gave television audiences a startling glimpse of the strange and beautiful work of Julie Taymor. A theater director long admired for the magic she conjures onstage, she blends masks, puppetry and human actors into a seamless whole. In 1986 she won her first Obie for her stage version of Thomas Mann's *The Transposed Heads*. Five years later she received a MacArthur Foundation "genius" award.

Taymor's work, which takes her around the globe, has recently expanded to include opera. Last September she directed Stravinsky's opera *Oedipus Rex* for the Saito Kinen Festival in Matsumoto, Japan, with Seiji Ozawa conducting and Jessye Norman singing the role of Jocasta. In June, Taymor will travel to Florence, Italy, with Zubin Mehta, where she will direct and he will conduct a production of Mozart's *Magic Flute*.

Many of Taymor's works begin with a short story. *Fool's Fire*, for example, is based on "Hop-Frog" by Edgar Allan Poe. In Poe's story the court jester is a dwarf, long ago captured and brought as a gift to the monstrous king. Until now, Hop-Frog has endured the cruel torments of the courtiers, taking clever vengeance with his sharp wit and quick tongue. But he cannot bear it when another dwarf—this one a beautiful woman—is subjected to the king's lewd humiliations. For a masquerade party, Hop-Frog persuades the king and ministers to dress as orangutans, purportedly as a joke. He then chains them together, hoists them into the air and burns them alive.

Like Poe, Taymor explores the landscape beyond realism, the poetic realm of myth and nightmare and dream. By mixing live actors, masked actors and puppets, she can emphasize the contrast between the human characters and their world. In *Fool's Fire*, says Taymor, "the bizarre life of the palace is grittier and more realistic than would ever be possible with an all-human cast."

Taking a cue from Poe's imagined historical setting, Taymor went for her visual inspiration to pre-Renaissance Italian painting—particularly the frescoes of Ambrogio Lorenzetti and Giotto, which have always struck her as being oddly theatrical. Their forced perspective, two dimensionality and hard line, she realized, would translate well to theater and film; to add

Conjuring magic on the stage

Hop-Frog waits under table at banquet in *Fool's Fire.* His joke: animals served on platters will come alive.

depth she looked to the dramatic light of Caravaggio.

With the overall setting in mind—a fairy-tale castle with long arched hallways and a spiral staircase up to Hop-Frog's humble room in the tower—Taymor sketched and then sculpted her bloated noblemen in clay. In the shift from two dimensions to three, she discovered ways to shove an ear or an eye askew to create asymmetrical faces rich with expression. Her longtime companion and frequent collaborator, composer Elliot Goldenthal (he wrote the music for *Fool's Fire*), describes Taymor's drawing and sculpting as an almost unconscious process. "She sees it exactly before she even begins. So the physical action is just creating what's already there. It's scary how deep she goes, how close she gets to the demons. But it's sheer joy for her."

When Taymor is satisfied with her sculpted heads, a team of craftsmen and technicians led by Michael Curry takes over to make the actual puppets, or "characters," as Taymor prefers to call them. Making molds directly off her sculptures, they build the bodies and heads in soft foam latex or hard Celastic, a sort of plastic papier-mâché.

Then, using her own face to demonstrate squinched eyes or a deep scowl, Taymor describes the range of movement she wants in each character's face. Curry drafts the blueprints to locate the intricate cables for operating the faces of the more complex characters. The king alone requires four performers. Three of them are inside or behind the royal body, one animating the king's feet and hands, two others operating cables attached to his cheeks, eyes and brow. The fourth, a skilled actor, is behind him, operating the lips and head as he speaks the king's lines.

Relishing the opportunities for invention

Though a relative newcomer to film, Taymor relished the opportunities for invention presented by the medium, elaborating on the tricks of scale that she frequently plays onstage. To create a masquerade ball with hundreds of dancers, for instance, she made miniature wooden mannequins and put them in a 12-foot-wide ballroom with a kaleidoscopic floor. As the floor moves, the dolls spin. For close-up shots, she put the David Parsons Dance Company into identical costumes, shot them on high-definition television as they danced, and matted the images into those of the twirling mannequins. The result is a shimmering sea of dancers evocative of Hollywood's lavish fantasies.

But like Poe, Taymor is after much more than courtly elegance. So she contrasted the shimmering beauty of the ballroom scene with what she describes as a "raw, funky crudeness." For the scene portraying the king and his ministers in midnight debauchery, she gave them life-size female sexual playthings. Made of

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Minister's wife (left) and minister (right) in *Fool's Fire* were first sketched, then created as sculptures, by Taymor. From those sculptures, molds were made; foam latex was then poured into the molds and baked.

wood, with movable joints, these mannequins are mute, and able to move only when their masters manipulate them. That is, until they witness the humiliation of the female dwarf, Trippetta, by the king. The pain of that moment stirs their spirit to life: a head turns away, and down a wooden cheek runs a single enormous tear.

It is a heartstopping moment, testimony to puppetry's power. A puppet, says Taymor, "is a sort of poetic abbreviation, a distillation to a character's essence. It is more archetype than individual, an ideogram for Vulgarity, Brutality, Helplessness, Despair. That these creatures are inanimate only enhances that concentration of meaning."

Though she acknowledges that directors like Fellini or David Lynch might have successfully managed the fat ministers by casting bizarrely fat people, "you're not able to distance yourself from them," says Taymor, "or if you do, you're just being cruel as well. Whereas the king and his ministers in *Fool's Fire* are so oily and corpulent and comic, you can give way to all your aversion. Puppetry can be more obscene than real people. It can be pornographic and hideously violent. You'd never let kids watch a human version of a Punch and Judy show."

Only for Hop-Frog and Trippetta did Taymor cast human beings, Michael Anderson (best known for his role in the television series *Twin Peaks*) and Mireille Mosse, each three and a half feet tall. "Traditionally, dwarfs have been treated as objects, given as gifts, toys, pets," explains Taymor. "People think of them as some other thing. In film, the dwarf himself has become a special effect. In *Fool's Fire* the main character—the dwarf—is the dimensional one. Because Hop-Frog is human, the audience will identify with him, even though he commits a gross act of murder. Through the choice of technique, I've determined whose side you'll be on."

Taymor has been fascinated with issues of character portrayal ever since she was a child growing up in a suburb of Boston. Her mother recalls how Julie would come to her and insist she make faces—angry ones or ecstatic ones—while the youngster drew, a technique she still employs. "She was always a perfectionist," says Betty Taymor. "She just wasn't ever fuzzy in her tastes."

Taymor's formal stage career began at age 11, in a production of *Cinderella* at Boston Children's Theater.

Miriam Horn, a senior editor at U.S. News and World Report, *reports on the arts and also freelances for* Vanity Fair *and the* New Republic.

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She soon moved on to the more radical Theater Workshop of Boston, where she participated in the creation of original works. At 16 she announced to her mother that she was off to study at the Ecole de Mime in Paris. "My friends asked me how I could let her do such a thing," says Betty Taymor. "I explained that Julie's not exactly the kind of person that you 'let' do something."

Using masks to shed the earthbound self

In Paris, Taymor did her first work with masks. "I learned how to transform myself into a nonhuman object," she says, "and how to infuse an inanimate object with character. It was the beginning of my interest in how form shapes a story. What is the soul of a broom? If there's a fat person on the sofa, what story does that image tell? What kind of voice comes out of a Coke bottle?" It was an approach that turned the "Method" on its head. Where Method actors learn to work from the inside out, mask artists work from the outside in. "If you put on a mask," says Taymor, "you get free of the limitations of your own body and face. A man can become a young girl."

The power inherent in puppets and masks became clearer to Taymor at Oberlin College, where she set out to learn more about the ritual origins of theater through a study of folklore and mythology. Shamanism was the focus of her work; Inuit shamans, she discovered, used masks to shed their earthbound self so that audiences would go along with them on their spiritual journey. And they also used masks as a means of altering their inner state.

At the same time that she was digging into the origins of performance, Taymor was experimenting with the theatrical avant-garde. Then in residence at Oberlin was Herbert Blau, founding director of the Actor's Workshop of San Francisco and a director of the Repertory Theater of Lincoln Center. He invited Taymor to participate in his company. "Technically, she joined as a student," says Blau, "but Julie was never really a student. She was so accomplished when she started, she was a virtual colleague." Taymor collaborated with such talents as Bill Irwin (a clown, director and actor who has also won a MacArthur award) and Sharon Ott (now artistic director of the Berkeley Repertory Theater); they created original work out of themes provided by Blau. She also staged her first two puppet productions at Oberlin.

Finally, on a Watson Fellowship earned at Oberlin, Taymor went to Indonesia to drink at the source. She planned to stay for several months; she remained for four years. Learning the language as she went along, Taymor joined a company that was doing political theater, then formed her own group. In time, her company evolved into an international troupe of women and men, Teatr Loh (*loh* means "the source"). Members of the group trained one another—in traditional dance, Tai Chi, improvisation, mask making, acting and singing—and created original pieces based on themes Taymor chose. Exploration of the borders between cultures became the subject of their first work, *Tirai* ("Curtain"), a play in six languages.

Those were difficult years for Taymor. To be a tall American female director in Indonesia was unusual to

For *The King Stag* (1984), a commedia del l'arte, Taymor designed the costumes and masks, did choreography. Long arms of the looming bird-magician figure were inspired by flowing sleeves she saw on Korean garments.

In Bali, Indonesia, in 1978, the members of Teatr Loh rehearse *Tirai.* Taymor had observed that the Balinese seemed to carry everything with them when going to a ceremony; this scene is an abstraction of that idea.

say the least. There was an earthquake followed by floods, which destroyed one of the troupe's shelters. Taymor contracted malaria. And 15 minutes into their first national tour, the company's bus was hit head-on by a truck, leaving one performer with a broken back, another with a broken leg and Taymor's chin and lip carved in two.

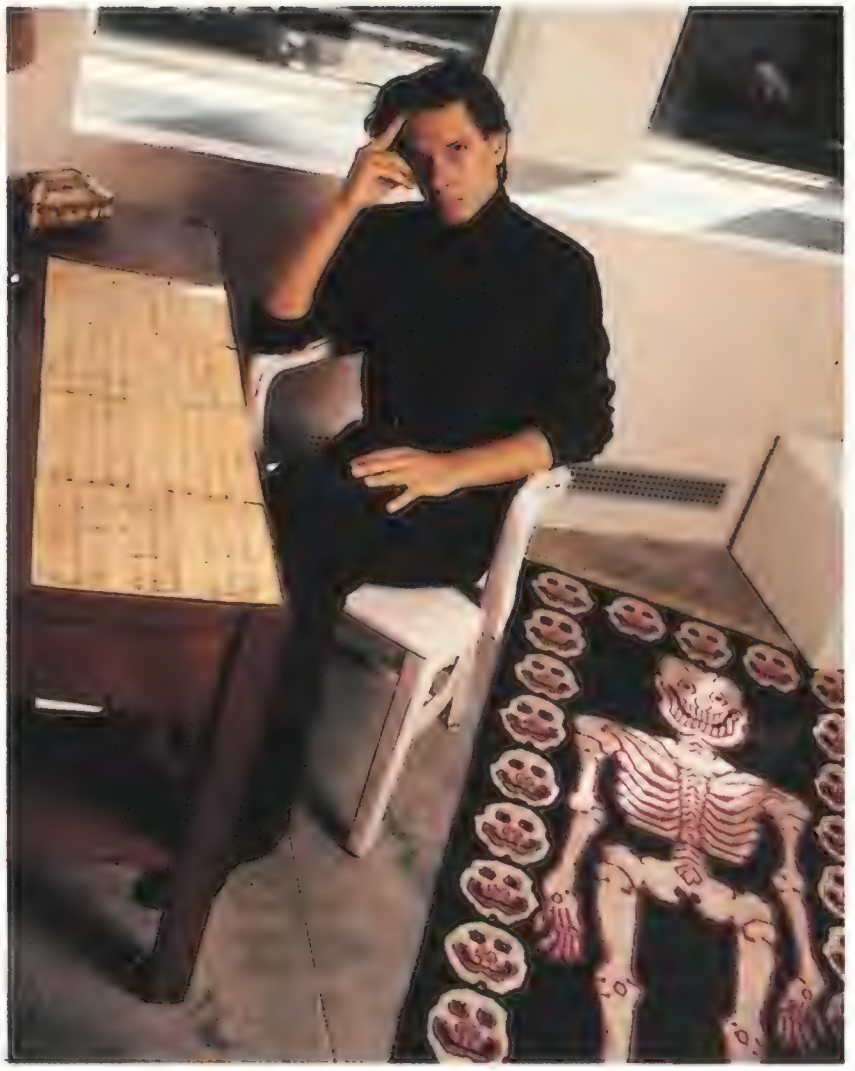
Yet it was that very "baptism by fire," as Taymor now calls it, that most shaped her as an artist. From those years of living dangerously came her legendary serenity. To this day, in even the most complex and demanding rehearsals, she remains a relaxed presence, patiently nudging her actors to dig deeper into the lines or stretch farther their odd faces and cumbersome bodies, and laughing heartily when one hits precisely the right sneer of exasperation or disdain. From her uncomfortable perch as an outsider came an acute sensitivity to the experience of alienation, a theme that has run through all of her works.

Some of the productions that Teatr Loh staged in Indonesia attracted a faithful following—unused to theater productions repeated on many nights, people would return to see the same show, shouting out lines in unison with the cast or happily telling the rest of the audience what would come next. Ever since then, Taymor has been interested in the idea of theater as a communal ritual. On returning to New York in 1980, she and Elizabeth Swados collaborated on *The Haggadah*, a theatrical enactment of a ritual. It was, says Taymor, "the Passover ceremony fleshed out." The audience sat on two sides of a long room, as if at a long seder table. Behind them, on shadow screens, the ten plagues were enacted, with two-dimensional frogs and locusts flying through the air. Leading his people out of a land of matzoh-like pyramids, Moses, his hair forming Hebrew letters, parted the Red Sea by lifting two sides of the long tablecloth into the air, creating a channel through which the audience saw the shadows of people passing. Called a cantata by Swados, the work was sung by a chorus of singers of all ages.

Constantly responding to each other's work

Attending the performance was Elliot Goldenthal, the young composer who would become Taymor's collaborator and with whom she has lived for the past eight years. A graduate of the Manhattan School of Music who studied formally with John Corigliano and informally with Aaron Copland, Goldenthal has won wide acclaim for his music for the films *Drugstore Cowboy* and *Alien*[3]. In the past decade he has composed the music for most of Taymor's works. "Our collaboration is the greatest thing in my life," says Taymor. "We're constantly responding to each other's work. In fact, it never completely stops, our work, no matter where we are. It can be a little intense that way. But the tension from work doesn't enter our personal lives. And we trust each other completely. If I don't like something musically, and he feels adamant, I'll go along—and vice versa." In 1984, the two worked with director Andrei Serban at the American Repertory Theater on *The King Stag*, for which Taymor's elegant designs, inspired by Asian theater, won several awards (left).

Taymor then turned to a wholly American subject.



When Juan Darién (center) is suspected of being a jaguar in disguise, the jaguar tamer and a teacher hypnotize him to find out; Elliot Goldenthal (right) cowrote the theater piece and composed the music.

She had found a little book called *The Adventures of Jonathan Corncob, Loyal American Refugee.* She was also fascinated by the true-life story of Deborah Sampson Gannett, who had disguised herself as a man and fought in the Revolutionary War. They became the basis for *Liberty's Taken,* a bawdy picaresque probing "the underbelly of the American Revolution." It was one of Taymor's most ambitious works, with 150 characters including a 30-foot-high brothel in the shape of a woman, with shadow-puppet images all over its body, and an Army captain on a hobby horse. "The whole thing was kind of sweet," says Taymor; "it was inspired by native folk art and toys. But it was also a bit demented. When the men starved, they ripped apart the horse, tearing the Velcro to eat the boards."

Two other works followed in quick succession. Taymor, Goldenthal and writer Sydney Goldfarb created *The Transposed Heads* for the American Music Theater Festival, based on an Indian legend adapted by Thomas Mann. Then Taymor directed two productions of *The Tempest,* with Caliban a mud-headed creature (pp. 72-73) and Ariel stripped to nothing but a mask and a puppeteer's hand.

It was *Juan Darién,* however, first staged in 1988, that finally brought major attention to Taymor's work (above). Based on a short story by Uruguayan Horacio Quiroga, *Juan Darién* is the tale of an orphaned jaguar cub that is tenderly nursed by a bereaved village mother and transformed into a human being. When the child's foster mother dies, struck down by the same plague that has beset the village, the boy seeks shelter in a circus, but the trainer suspects his origins and the villagers turn on him in fear. Their cruelty changes him back to the beast they accuse him of being. He reverts to a jaguar and exacts revenge.

Goldenthal had discovered the 1920 story by Quiroga, whom he calls "the first magical realist," several years earlier. With a private grant from Norman Lear, he and Taymor went on a three-month sojourn to Mexico. "We saw the Day of the Dead, the muralists, the marketplace, the mountains, the faces of the people in the villages," says Taymor. "One day, we sat in the hotel and listened to the sound of a broken-down piano somewhere in a bar, and another somewhere else, and Elliot wrote 'Round at Midnight' [the interlude in *Juan Darién*]. He wrote the 'Gloria' while we were there, and I said it sounds like 100,000 butterflies, and that's what I ended up creating." Goldenthal remembers an even richer array of sounds: "I heard crickets, tree toads, howler monkeys, locals singing in the streets, and a jukebox playing in the distance—and at one point they were all harmonizing perfectly."

The influence of that journey is everywhere in the finished work. Taymor's jungle is as fecund and quivering with life as any Mexican landscape mural; her puppets have the sharp, planar faces of the peasants of Diego Rivera. Having experimented with making shadow puppets using Plexiglas and electric light, she returned for *Juan Darién* to leather and fire, wanting the sensuality of the natural materials.

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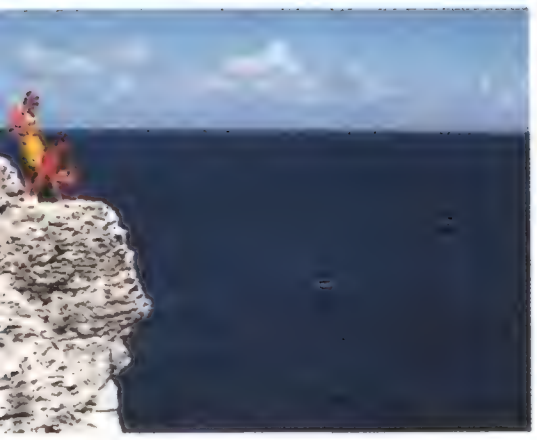

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"Those who know us, love us."

Goldenthal's music, too, murmurs and shrieks and throbs with the sounds of the Mexican jungle. The score combines European liturgical harmonies with folkloric melodies played on Maya clay flutes, whistles, Japanese taiko drums, African shakers and a didgeridoo, a long hollow tube from Australia with a groan like an agonized beast. The out-of-tune bar piano reappeared, as did marimbas, trumpets and a tuba playing a sliver of the traditional "Dies Irae," in a "carnival manner, over and over again, maniacally." Raised in the Red Hook projects of Brooklyn, Goldenthal found many of his eclectic sounds in his own backyard. "As a kid, I'd open my window and hear salsa coming from one corner of the courtyard, Puccini from another and a polka from a third. It all gets in there somehow, I guess."

For the heart of the work's libretto Goldenthal resurrected the 13th-century requiem mass used by Mozart and Verdi, sung entirely in Latin and Spanish. They had tried using English but, says Taymor, "it damaged the experience. We wanted the audience to respond viscerally to the mystery. The color and sound of the language are more important than its meaning."

The mass is a fitting libretto for a work the creators describe as a "passion play," a ritualized chronicle of the martyrdom of innocence by bigotry. The question is, says Taymor, Who is the beast? Is it the wild creature of the jungle, or is it the defenders of civilization who destroy him in the name of piety and order? Taymor says she doesn't relate to Juan Darién—the outcast. But she does see herself as an outsider, something she has chosen to be, she says, "from the time I was a kid. I like the perspective it gives me. I'm able to be immersed and distanced at the same time. But it has also often been lonely and extremely hard." Goldenthal describes a similar feeling growing up with a Catholic mother and a Jewish father in Brooklyn. "When that's going on, it heightens your awareness of bigotry."

Yet, as in all of Taymor's work, there is a countertheme that can be heard, working against the main story to gently subvert it. The lyrical beauty of Goldenthal's mass suggests a vastly more tender view of religion than the story of bigotry unfolding onstage. And little shadow plays, lewd and violent, disrupt the refined beauty of the work, not only because they are crude and cartoonlike but because they invert the main story: in these, it is the jaguar that is the deceptive, destroying beast. The idea of duality and contradiction, says Taymor, is a legacy from Indonesia: Indonesians drape all statues with cloths of black and white because they know, she explains, that the dark always accompanies the light.

For her most recent project, *Oedipus Rex*, Taymor began by thinking about what Stravinsky had intended when he wrote the opera. "He was interested in the monumental aspects of Sophocles' story," she says. So she came up with the idea of oversize "stone" masks and hands, inspired by Cycladic sculpture, to be worn by the principal characters (p. 63). It meant that the singers' movements, and the choreography of the supporting dancers, would be very minimal—"very sculptural," as she puts it. First, however, Taymor had to get Jessye Norman's approval. "I made a sculpture and renderings of how it would look," says Taymor. "Last February she was in New York. We brought the sculpture up to her hotel, and I presented the entire concept. She got it immediately."

Taymor felt particularly challenged by creating both a stage and film version of the opera; with a cast of more than a hundred and a full orchestra, it is her biggest

Caliban casts an anxious look back at Prospero's cave in *The Tempest*, as the two clowns are distracted from helping him by the vision of wondrous clothes.

project to date. "Most opera films are shot live with multiple cameras," she says, "and all you get is cut, cut, cut; it's not a movie." To make the opera work as a film, several days of special shooting were done. *Oedipus Rex* premiered at the Sundance Film Festival last month and will be shown on *Great Performances* in May.

Taymor's great immediate ambition is to create with Goldenthal an operatic version of *Grendel*, John Gardner's novelistic rendering of *Beowulf* from the monster's point of view. They envision that it will have a chorus of more than 30, with 8 to 10 principals, 10 children, and 15 or 20 dancers, all performing on ice. In some scenes, Grendel will be a human besieged by hundreds of tiny puppets; other times, he will be a 40-foot-tall shadow puppet. Again, she will use language to tip the emotional scales. "This poor slob Grendel," as Taymor calls him, will sing in English, while the others remain unintelligible singing in Old English, thereby linking the monster and audience against the rest of the world. "Grendel is a voice for the misbegotten," says Goldenthal. And as an outsider, like his creator, he brings a slightly skewed and illuminating perspective on humanity. "Brecht and Shakespeare set stories outside their familiar world so people would see their own times differently," says Taymor.

As yet, Taymor has not found a producer willing to finance the multimillion-dollar work. "One opera company turned us down because they thought it wasn't relevant enough to contemporary life," she says with a scowl. "I grew up in the projects," adds Goldenthal. "What did we respond to on every sweltering street? Myth: the comics of Thor, Conan, Superman. I mean, they're sure not out there reading Clifford Odets."

Taymor's struggle to bring monsters and magical creatures to the American theater, and to engage whole communities in her work as she once did in Indonesia, is clearly not yet won. But she shows no signs of losing heart. "People ask me why don't I participate in the Greenwich Village Halloween parade," she says, referring to the famously wild costume extravaganza in downtown New York each year. "I always tell them the same thing. I do Halloween every day."

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By Robert Wernick

When it comes to gossip, we're all-ears listeners

Whether it's prattle or backbiting, intrigue or hearsay, humans can't resist the juicy tidbit about the rich, the famous or the neighbors

We will unfortunately never know exactly what our cave-dwelling forebears, Mr. and Mrs. Erectus, talked about as they squatted on the cavern floor in the evening amid the piles of gnawed bones. It is pleasant to think of them discussing such topics as, Why does the sun rise in the east? Or, What becomes of Grandfather after we have laid him, surrounded by cherished objects, in his burial mound? (Thus laying the foundations of what would be called philosophy and religion.)

But assuming that Erectus was not basically different from his descendants—you and me—the bulk of the talk must have been about everyday incidents. Whatever was interesting or puzzling or frightening would have taken precedence: what Grandma said when the wolf bit her; or the strange events in the cave two valleys away, where a woman gave birth to twin flaxen-hairs.

That is to say, they were gossiping. Gossip—the free-form talk about anything happening in the world—is one ingredient that defines human life. Only humans can exchange knowledge about distant people and events through the informal channel called gossip. If

"Assuming our cave-dwelling forebears were not different from us, their talk was about everyday incidents:

they could not, no human community—remote village or College of Cardinals—could survive for very long.

Actually, there is gossip and, in perhaps its most elevated form, there is history. The distinction between the two may not be so hard and fast as we might suppose. Academic historians are appalled by gossip, and with good reason, for it is often inaccurate, incomplete, mendacious, prejudiced. They would prefer to deal only with measurable confirmable phenomena like the fluctuations in mean annual temperature and the wholesale price of olive oil. Unfortunately, human history is acted out by human beings, and in order to learn how human beings have felt and thought and behaved, historians have to depend on what was passed from mouth to ear by gossip.

A pioneering purveyor of riveting gossip, Herodotus was called the father of history by the Greeks. Indeed, his history consists mostly of stories he picked up from priests, merchants and other sources during his travels through the eastern Mediterranean. He knew that many of those stories were exaggerated, contradictory or totally baseless, and he had, like all historians since, to rely on his knowledge of the world and human nature to pick out plausible versions. Herodotus also had a mission in mind: to bring alive to the ethnocentric Greeks foreign, and interesting, cultures. So it is that we glean gossipy details about peoples like the Egyptians: "Sons never have to take care of their parents if they don't want to, but daughters must, whether they like it or not." Or, "In any home where a cat dies," residents are said to "shave off their eyebrows."

If we did not have the kind of stories that Herodotus collected, we would have to rely for our knowledge of the past on official documents, and these are usually no more reliable than gossip, and a good deal duller. Of Tiglath-Pileser and Assurbanipal, great kings of Assyria, the little we know comes from wall inscriptions, various records and scanty correspondence. In these texts they emerge as just, wise and victorious. It is a pity that there was not a Suetonius in Nineveh who could have given us some idea of what they really were like.

Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus lived in the second cen-

what Grandma said when that vicious wolf bit her;
the woman two caves away who bore twin flaxen-hairs."

Illustrations by Arnold Roth

"Into his chronicle of the Caesars, Suetonius put the emperors seen close up: Nero barring the theater gates so no one, not even women in childbirth, could walk out on him while he played his lyre."

tury A.D. Into his *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, a chronicle of the first Roman emperors, he shoveled everything he could find—the official records and the backstairs gossip. Like gossipers everywhere, he made no distinction between great, world-shaking events and insignificant ones. He wanted lively action, human interest. Alongside the battles and the laws he put the emperors seen close up: abstemious Augustus boasting that he could fast better than any Jew; mad Caligula inviting a crowd of people to see him dedicate a bridge at Puteoli and then having them pushed into the water so that he could leave them to drown; Nero barring the gates to the theater so that no one, not even women in childbirth, could walk out on him while he played his lyre onstage and sang his prizewinning songs.

Four centuries later, the Byzantine historian Procopius provides an example of a single writer who used both official records and gossip. Procopius was an official at the court of Emperor Justinian, and of his three surviving works, two describe in great and sycophantic detail the achievements of that great, beneficent ruler and his wise and virtuous wife, Theodora.

But between these two accounts, Procopius wrote another, generally called *The Secret History*, which was not published till long after his death, and which draws a markedly different portrait of the imperial pair. They were, he says, a pair of bloodthirsty demons. Justinian was crafty, hypocritical, secretive, two-faced, with "no more sense than a donkey," and was responsible for the deaths of countless millions of people. As for the saintly Theodora, the daughter of a circus-animal keeper, she grew up to be an itinerant entertainer as well as a cruel and despotic hag who delighted in torturing and dismembering her victims.

The question naturally arises, which of the two Procopiuses is to be believed? The deeds recorded by Procopius, the court official—Justinian's victorious wars, his mammoth building programs, his codification of Roman law—can be readily confirmed from other sources. The extraordinary vices of Justinian and Theodora are to be found only in the pages of the "other" Procopius, writing as the court gossip.

Contemporary historians of course draw the line at his assertion that the imperial pair used diabolical charms to create floods and earthquakes. But they accept his accounts of a monumentally corrupt and lascivious court. And page-turning stuff it is, for wickedness almost always makes for a livelier story than virtue.

It became more feasible to check up on the accuracy of gossip when literacy and the use of pen and paper became widespread, and written records began to accumulate. This increased appetite for documentation was readily apparent by the 18th century. At that point, royalty, in whatever form, had proved a perennial subject of gossip, just as they are of fairy tales (witness our fixation with the foibles of Charles and Diana, not to mention Fergie).

And so it is appropriate that the greatest gossip of all time should have spent his life at the court of the most self-consciously royal of all kings. Louis XIV of France, in his effort to centralize the government of the nation for his personal supervision, had created a

Mr. Wernick, a frequent SMITHSONIAN *contributor, divides his time between Paris and Georgia, enabling him to collect gossip on both sides of the Atlantic.*

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gossip's paradise by packing the whole ruling class of France into the endless rooms that constituted his palace of Versailles.

There was absolutely no privacy as hundreds of lords and ladies milled about in their perruques and high heels, flirting, intriguing, climbing in and out of one another's beds, gambling, angling for a royal nod or a smile, and somehow running the country. In the middle of it all was Louis de Rouvroy, duc de Saint-Simon, a little man bobbing around on the highest heels at court, taking it all in and writing down everything he saw and heard, daily for more than 30 years.

Though he has had his defenders, Saint-Simon appears to have been an insignificant little fellow, the kind of man of whom one might say, "If he was a horse, no one would buy him." "Nobody pays any attention [to him]," said the Prussian Ambassador. Saint-Simon was vain, vengeful, narrow-minded and impossibly snobbish.

But he also had the sharp eye and taste for the dramatic that mark the expert gossip, and he was one of the great masters of French prose. He devised a uniquely racy style, inventing words when needed (he is said to have coined "*patriote*" and "*publicité*"). He sometimes got his facts wrong, and his interpretations even more so, but no one who dips into his memoirs can doubt that were one transported to the Sun King's Versailles, one would feel perfectly at home.

Everything is noted, in the ramshackle order of real life: war, politics, religion, intrigue, money, sex, disease, death, marriage, adultery, rivalry, ambition, lawsuits, slander, digestive upsets. Like all true gossips, Saint-Simon lets nothing escape him. He is present to observe the Duchesse d'Orleans, proud of her immemorially noble ancestry, give her son a resounding smack in the face for letting himself be bribed and bullied into marrying one of the king's illegitimate daughters. He is around to note that in one year, an excruciatingly bored Mme. de Puissieux, standing around in the endless hours of court etiquette, nervously chews up 100,000 crowns' worth of fine Genoese lace in the shawl she wears around her neck and shoulders.

For Louis XIV, nonstop fun and games

Great events go on in the background all the time. The long war spreads over Europe. All the crops are destroyed in the terrible winter of 1709. The peasants starve, the enemy is crossing the frontiers. As always, the king insists that everyone at court be gay and smiling; the balls go on as before. (Back in 1701, a day after his own brother died, Louis insisted the card games must begin again.) And Saint-Simon goes on noting it all down.

Gossip about people of importance has always been a dangerous game. Suetonius wrote his scandalous stories about Caesars who were safely dead. Procopius and Saint-Simon kept their manuscripts well out of the sight of Justinian and Louis XIV, to be published only when the rulers were safely in their graves.

Literacy and liberty, the twin geniuses of modern times, have changed all that. Beginning about the time of Saint-Simon's death, in the middle of the 18th century, gossip has been able to come out of the closet and cavort in full view of the world. Diarists, letter writers, pamphleteers, journalists, have all followed the little duke's model and written down every little lively detail of life around them.

Many of the accounts have turned into enduring literary monuments. Anyone who wants to know what life was like at the turn of the 18th century in London or Paris can turn to the sharp, lively letters and diaries of Fanny Burney. From an afternoon's outing in Paris, she is able to report on the unfortunate circumstances of one young matron: "Immediately near me was seated the unhappy Madame Octave de Segur, of whose strange misfortunes you have probably heard? her husband, a remarkably amiable young man, son to the former ambassador to Russia—about 7 years ago suddenly disappeared—& has never been heard of since! His disconsolate wife shut herself up from all society for a considerable time. . . ."

Figures eminent and obscure move across Burney's stage, and we glimpse them from her gossipy, on-the-spot vantage point. She has an opportunity to observe Napoleon at a reception for "le Premier Consul" in Paris in 1802: "He has by no means the look to be expected from Bonaparte," she reports tartly. His face, "pale even to sallowness," an expression of "Melan-

"Byzantine historian Procopius provided both official records and gossip from court of Emperor Justinian."

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"Back in 1701, one day after his own brother dies, Louis XIV decrees the court's card games, and the air of gossipy frivolity, must go on, no matter the tragedy."

choly & Meditation," and the "plainness of his dress" impart "far more the air of a Student than a Warrior."

She makes an excursion, during this same Parisian interlude, to Jacques-Louis David's studio, finding the celebrated painter out and the salon presided over by his quick-witted and calculating wife. Burney is, as ever, prepared to take her measure: "She was a woman of no sort of elegance, either of person or attire; & if ever she had possessed any beauty, it had deserted her at an early period. . . . Madame David appeared to me to be quite shrewd, penetrating, sagacious & sarcastic. These are qualities very likely to be congenial to the taste of David."

It has become fashionable to say, with Marshall McLuhan, that television has turned the world into a global village. But the process was really begun by the 19th-century novel. The great novelists, trying to plumb the depths of the soul, found that the best, most readable way of doing it was to give a formal structure to gossip. They allowed the world to peep behind the lace curtains of Emma Bovary's house or to learn what the odd Karamazov boys were up to once they got away from their impossible old man.

If the world is now awash in gossip, it is not just because we like to talk about other people. Though most of us would virtuously deny it, most of us do not at all mind being talked about. In fact, we rather enjoy it; it raises us out of our anonymous mediocrity into the warm, bright light of celebrity. Writers and artists—Byron, Whistler, Hemingway, Warhol—have found that being constantly talked about makes the road to immortality that much easier.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, godfather of revolutions, was perhaps the first to see that to make a successful literary career, you don't need to wait for others to gossip about you; you can gossip about yourself. His *Confessions* is a collection of anecdotes about what he called the "dark and dirty labyrinth" of his inner life. He shrewdly calculated that by spilling all this dirt he would get a reputation as a man of pitiless honesty and steely purity. Indeed, how could a man who recounts how he left all five of his children at foundling hospitals (where the statistical probability was that they would all die in a few months) not be telling the truth? "Anyone," he said, "who can believe me to be a dishonest man deserves to be strangled." Spoilsport critics have examined the details and shown that *Confessions* is full of distortions and falsehoods. But for two and a

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half centuries Rousseau has been considered a model of courageous frankness.

Not everyone is willing to bare all the dirty little secrets of his soul just to reach a wide audience. There had to be a more painless way of getting oneself gossiped about, and it was found in the 1920s in New York City by an unsuccessful vaudeville hoofer (he had played the Palace on Broadway) turned successful journalist. Walter Winchell, a hungry young man with a quick eye and a gift for catchy phrases, had got his start by pasting up items of chitchat about fellow performers backstage. Later, he had begun to feed bits of Broadway news to the papers. A tabloid called the *New York Evening Graphic* was then unfolding its wings, and Winchell got a job there writing about show-business news. One day in 1924, he took a giant step forward and wrote the following:

> Helen Edy Brooks, widow of William Rock, has been plunging in Miami real estate . . . It's a girl at the Carter de Havens . . . Lenore Ulric paid $7.00 income tax . . . Fannie Brice is betting on the horses at Belmont . . . S. Jay Kaufman sails on the 16th via the *Berengaria* to be hitched to a Hungarian . . . Reports have it that Lillian Lorraine has taken a husband again.

To the reader of 70 years hence, this may seem like pallid stuff. Aside from Fannie Brice, who some old-timers may remember as a musical comedy star, who *were* these people? And who in the world cares where they plunged or how they got hitched? Winchell, with his finger on the pulse of "Mr. and Mrs. America and all the ships at sea" (his trademark greeting to his radio fans), realized that people would be fascinated.

Gossip has become a billion-dollar industry in the years since then; it overruns newspapers, magazines, television, books. Yet none of its practitioners has ever quite equaled the magic and the power of Walter Winchell in his prime. For 20 years, his column was carried in hundreds of papers, his broadcasts reached millions of homes. Everyone wanted to read him. And more important, everyone wanted to be mentioned by him. So much so that he did not have to waste much time actually looking for gossip. A constant stream of movie stars, politicians, millionaires, public enemies and press agents besieged him with hot tips, and it was as much as his three ghostwriters could do to sort them out and reduce them to the rapid three-dot barrage that came out every morning from 1929 to 1963 in the *New York Daily Mirror.*

Franklin Roosevelt and J. Edgar Hoover fed Winchell items. The rich and the powerful did their best to butter him up, and he knew how to get what he wanted out of them. Once he ran this "blind" item: "A top New Dealer's mistress is a mobster's widow." Joseph P. Kennedy, chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, had reasons of his own for not wanting to see this story develop any further, and so he became a steady source of scoops from Washington.

"Rousseau recognized you can gossip about yourself: his *Confessions* admit abandoning his five children."

Winchell: going straight for the jugular

Walter Winchell would take on anyone. In his column, he crusaded against the Nazis before World War II and against the Communists afterward. And when someone offended him, he could be matchlessly scathing in private conversation:

> A few years ago Taylor Caldwell invited her [the Duchess of Windsor] for a luncheon with fifteen others. The Duchess's secretary phones Mrs. Caldwell to ask what transportation she was using, and Mrs. C. replied her husband would drive over to pick her up. The secretary said, "I'm sorry, Mrs. Caldwell, your husband is Jewish and the Duchess is Protestant and does not mix socially with Jews." Mrs. Caldwell then exploded, "Tell the Duchess I am Dutch Protestant and I don't mix socially with prostitutes."

Winchell could appear on the public scene himself, as when Lepke Buchalter, the gangster-head of Murder Incorporated, deciding he had no choice but to turn himself in, called on Winchell to meet him and hand

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"No one has quite equaled the magic of Walter Winchell: everyone wanted to be mentioned by him."

him over to J. Edgar Hoover. But the heart of Winchell's column, and of his appeal, always remained the bits of private gossip, the peep into the lives of the mysterious people that gossip columns are all about.

Across the continent, two doyennes of gossip were forging a career of hearsay, Hollywood-style. From the late 1930s onward, Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons enjoyed the reputation of being able to obliterate a star's good name, and make or break a career. Their competition for the juiciest tidbit was legendary in its ferocity. On occasion, they staged temporary rapprochements for the press, only to have the reconciliation give way to cat-fight banter. At one luncheon, Hedda, pretending to take offense at something Louella said, retorted, "One more crack like that, and I'll slug you." Louella got the last word: "That's all right, dear. As long as you let me have the exclusive on the story."

Yet even so voracious a gossipmonger as Hopper could display a forgiving side. Her first encounter with actor James Dean resulted in a savagely dismissive assessment: the soon-to-be megastar was "dressed like a bum" and scarfed down his food "like a ravenous hyena." By the time of his death at age 24, she petitioned the Motion Picture Academy to outfit Dean's grave with a larger-than-life granite "Oscar" headstone (the Academy politely declined).

The perennial gossip does face an occupational hazard: loose lips may cause the teller of tales no end of trouble. In recent memory, no one brought more wrath upon himself than Truman Capote. After 20 years whiled away as companion and confidante to the rich and famous, the writer gave way to an irresistible temptation: he reproduced that glittering and vapid world in (thinly disguised) fiction. In the mid-'70s, *Esquire* magazine printed a series of several chapters from Capote's wicked work-in-progress (a novel he never completed), *Answered Prayers*. Skewering personalities from director Joshua Logan (boring parties) to CBS president William Paley (alleged affair) and Jackie Kennedy (ornamental but a bit unrefined), Capote had embarked on a gleefully malicious escapade. Not surprisingly, he earned himself the enmity of nearly everyone he caricatured. "That dirty little toad," snapped one wounded acquaintance, "is never coming to my parties again." Doors all over Manhattan's East Side slammed shut to him—permanently.

Although Capote was deeply injured when people took the stories "so seriously," he remained largely unrepentant. Later, reflecting on his actions, he would state pugnaciously: "I am the only person in this country who could write this book—nobody else knows the people, nobody else has the experience and knowledge, and nobody else has the gall." In Capote's company, we are only a step away from the end foretold by Andy Warhol, when everyone in the world will be a celebrity—or, as Henry James more elegantly put it a century ago, "enjoy the distinction that waits upon vulgarity sufficiently attested"—for 15 minutes.

At times, as the 20th century wanes, it may seem that the moment has already arrived. When you take a seat on a plane, the chances are high that the person in the next seat is devouring a book or magazine article devoted in remorseless detail to the private life of a woman who was married to a President of the United States or of a banker who looted a pension fund and has absconded with millions. Turn on the TV set and you may be watching a television murder trial or a hearing of the Judiciary Committee of the U.S. Senate.

And all the while, gossip goes on performing its immemorial, and necessary, function of tickling our curiosity about what the chiefs and high priestesses of the tribe are really like behind their official masks, and about any new and startling events that break the plodding pattern of daily life. Not long ago, I was at a party attended by some distinguished European historians. One of them took me aside. "You are an American," he said. "Please tell me what you really know about the relations between John Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe."

Later, my eye was caught by a tabloid headline near a supermarket checkout counter. Of course, all those banner pronouncements tend to blur after a while. I can't be sure, but maybe it said: "PRINCE CHARLES RUNS OFF WITH MADONNA."

Hold the Shakespeare—it's tabloid gossip we hunger for: Did Prince Charles *really* run off with Madonna?

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Two warriors, wearing double bustles of eagle feathers, clash over territorial rights in the "Shield Dance" part of "Traditional Dance." Gary Tomahsah (right) is besting Morgan Tosee; both are Comanche.

Dancing in honor of their people

The American Indian Dance Theatre takes a joyful celebration of ancient traditions and customs to audiences throughout the world

Some in the audience fidget as wisps of smoke curl out into the darkened theater. The curtain rises on a tranquil scene. That smoke is merely sweet grass, used in a purifying ritual in which a shaman and two elders symbolically pass ancestral tradition to a young dancer. Then a venerable musician initiates another youth into ancient mysteries of drum and song.

Save for Kenny Merrick jr.'s sweetly plaintive and haunting flute solo later on, that is about the last of tranquillity. The American Indian Dance Theatre, resplendently outfitted, launches into dazzling sequences. Bodies whirl, stomp, hurtle about the stage accompanied by singing and chanting to the rhythm of drums, now and then augmented by whistles and bells.

These are native-American social dances, adapted from those performed at competitions known as pow-

wows, held every weekend throughout North America. All members of the company, who belong to many different tribes, have been top winners. From time immemorial, dance has been a part of their culture. Just like the sacred dances, kept within tribal confines, these are deeply spiritual, derived from ancient rite. They tell stories—of battles and the hunt, of the spirit world and the kinship of humans to all living things.

As recently as 1987, "American Indian music and dance, its artistry and the fantastic talent of its dancers, were not being adequately shared with the rest of the world," says director Hanay Geiogamah, a member of the Kiowa/Delaware tribes of Oklahoma, playwright and associate professor of theater in American Indian Studies at UCLA. And so he and New York producer Barbara Schwei launched the company. It has become an international star. Having performed throughout Europe and in the Middle East, North Africa and South America as well as all over the United States, it is now en route to a five-week engagement in Australia.

Dances with latitude—and always song

According to Schwei, "it has been a long process. We worked with various tribal councils for permission to perform some of their social dances. Then we had to be careful to present them authentically, and not alter form and significance in adapting for theatrical performance." Unlike most choreographed dances, inherent in these is a certain latitude. "Everybody has his own style," explains Morgan Tosee, an original member of the troupe, "as long as we are doing pretty much the same thing." Adds Derrick Davis, "We all grew up with traditional music and dance, so we know the boundaries and restrictions. And no dancer can dance without song."

Learning started in childhood. "I danced before I could walk," remembers Comanche Bonnie Tomahsah, "dancing on my daddy's lap in Oklahoma. Now, at powwows, I dance for the elders who can't dance anymore. Pride gives you that extra boost, because you're still young and vibrant and able to keep up the traditions."

Regalia is spectacular, blazing colors embellished with feathers, beadwork and silver. Each part of every outfit has meaning. Hair of the angora goat, used for leggings in several dances, denotes surefootedness. In the Eagle Dance, feathers represent power and bravery. The Kwakiutl, whose economy was built on the cedar tree and salmon, use cedar bark in their skirts.

Despite sold-out houses now, Geiogamah has an eye to the future. To him, the dance is a living thing. "We have years of challenging work ahead. But the dance will be good to us; it will be patient and wait for us, and we will be able to give it the respect it requires."

Jane D. Scholl

In the "Butterfly Dance," Cassie Soldierwolf, who is Arapaho, portrays the Zuni's most honored insect. By pollinating flowers it teaches children industry; by its beauty, an appreciation of the natural world. But it also has meaning for the tribal adults. "With Indians, there is no generation gap," Cassie says.

Photographs by Theo Westenberger

Intoning and drumming, presenter Chester Mahooty passes in front of Marty Pinnecoose as Zuni "Eagle Dance" begins. A celebration of the bird's power and wisdom, it is sacred to all tribes. Each has its own variations on steps and regalia. "Our emotions go into the dance, as well as steps, movement and gestures," says Marty, a Southern Ute whose Indian name is Eagle Child. Original AIDT members, both make their own outfits. Chester, a Zuni who is a master silversmith, created his beautiful turquoise jewelry.

"Apache Crown Dance" comes from ceremony still overseen by medicine men. Mountain Spirit (at the right, brandishing symbolic wands) comes to heal the afflicted and ill. A clown capers about, miming broadly while he strives to convey these subtle mystical concepts to the children of the tribe.

Intricate "Hamatsa Dance" of Kwakiutl teaches youth civic duty. An initiate disobeys his instructions to avoid evil Cannibal Spirit; attendants Raven (left) and Crooked Beak of Heaven pursue and set upon him, driving him mad. Back in the village, his sanity can be restored only by the women.

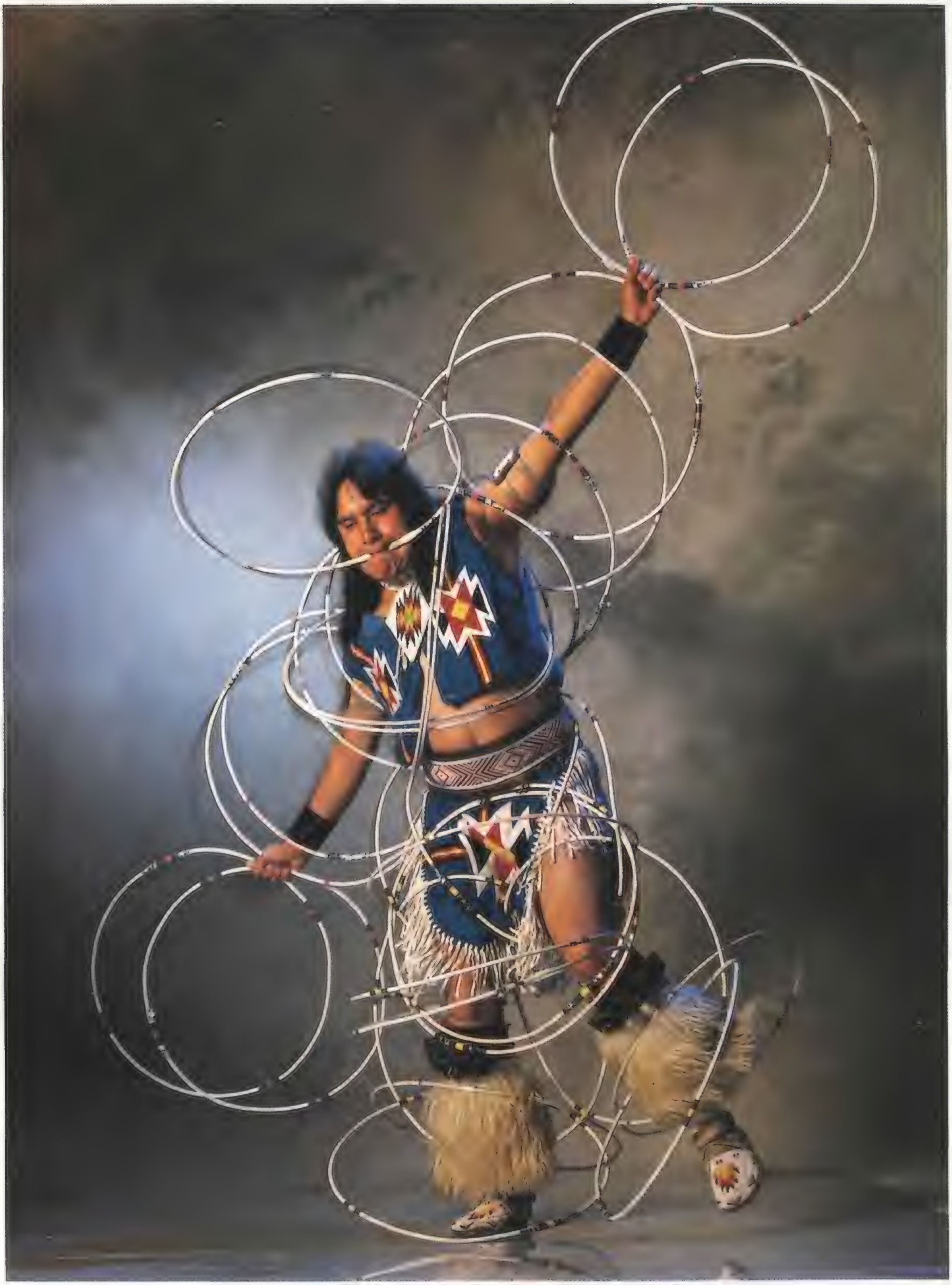
The Ponca Tribe's 80-year-old "Fancy Dance," ever popular at powwows, lately evolved into a high-energy challenge. As each dancer vies to outdo the others, they will all spin like human pinwheels: Derrick Davis, Hopi-Choctaw, left; Rudy Bob, who is Navajo; at right, Dwight Whitebuffalo, a Cheyenne.

In modern "Butterfly" version Leslie Barichello is one of five "Fancy Shawl" dancers. After their mates are killed in battle they retreat into cocoons—represented by their shawls—to convey their grief. Legend has it that they finally emerge to freedom and a new life, as expressed by a radiant Leslie.

"Eagle Dance" of Plains tribes is more swooping than Zuni's. Dancers soar and wheel about the stage to strains of wooden flute, enact bird's life cycle. Eagle is believed a messenger between Man and his Creator. From the left, the eagles are Fabian Fontenelle, Darrell Goodwill and Marty Pinnecoose.

"Men's Traditional," a warrior dance, relives a walk through the woods, hunting or being on the lookout for a foe. Tosee varies his steps as he imitates birds and animals met along the way. He is a carpenter, a farrier, the assistant dance director, troupe's head cook.

Eddie Swimmer, North Carolina Cherokee, is truly a lightning contortionist, manipulating up to 36 hoops into natural forms: snakes, butterflies, flowers. This will be an eagle. Dancing staccato, using every muscle in his body to wriggle in, out, of hoops, he will create a globe representing the Earth.



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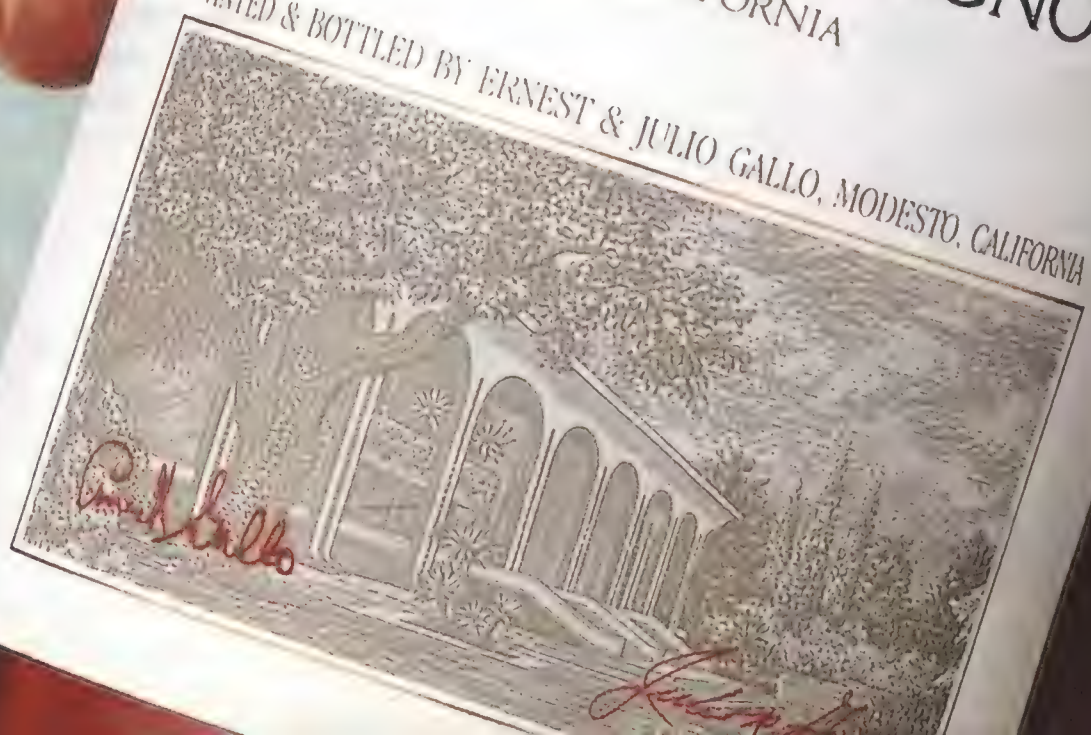

By Patrick Breslin

You can get a lot more than fleas at a market like this

If you can't find it at the First Monday flea market in Canton, Texas, chances are it doesn't exist. But, hey—keep on looking

Old tools intrigue a bargain hunter at the Canton market, one of the oldest and largest in the country.

Beat-up saddles, World War I goggles, old Coca-Cola bottles, framed Vargas pinup drawings from Playboy, *neon beer signs, meat cleavers, rocking chairs, hubcaps, duck decoys, cast-iron skillets . . .*

One day it's 100-plus acres of East Texas floodplain and rolling fields, empty except for a few scattered stands of native live oak. The next day a swarm of nomads in pickup trucks and trailers has set up camp here, unfolding hundreds of tables and piling them high with used goods. Out on Interstate 20, hordes of weekend browsers are heading this way from the greater Dallas area, eager to paw through the flotsam and jetsam of other people's lives. You can find just about anything you want in this treasure trove, and if you know what you're doing you can probably get it dirt cheap. That's why people all over the country have been thronging flea markets lately. But if you spend enough time mingling among the 90,000 or so folks gathered at First Monday Trade Days in Canton, Texas, you discover that there are other reasons, as well.

A flea market is fun. It's a good place to meet interesting characters and pig out on unusual food. It's also a cultural happening. Flea markets like Canton's showcase the contents of the nation's attics. We're not just talking nostalgia; we're talking history. Flea markets are museums of the not so long ago. They remind us of who we used to be and show us how we're changing.

The name "flea market" comes from the French *marché aux puces*, an acknowledgment that the clothes and bedding sold at the earliest bazaars were often infested with parasites. American tourists brought the term home after World War II. Such markets had been around in Europe at least since the Middle Ages, and in the United States since Colonial times, but in recent years their popularity has been soaring.

When you get that itch to go shopping

There's no such thing as a typical flea market. An enterprise billing itself as one can range from a dozen tables set up in a church parking lot to a Canton-size operation featuring a cast of thousands. It has been estimated that more than a million Americans spend part of each year vending their wares at such sales. The Mecca of flea markets is at Saint-Ouen, on the north side of Paris; it celebrated its 100th birthday a few years ago. During a good weekend it draws some 200,000 Parisians and tourists to its 3,000 booths. On this side of the Atlantic, well-known flea markets are tantalizing customers from Brimfield, Massachusetts, to the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California, and just about everywhere in between. But when aficionados speak of the monstrous operation just outside of Canton, there is awe in their voices.

Most of the month, Canton is a small, quiet town of

Vendor known as "Trash Alley Sally" presides over display of knickknacks while her top-hatted partner, Larry Sandlin, relaxes with a cup of coffee. A retired military man, Sandlin deals in 19th-century handguns.

3,500. During the weekend before the first Monday of each month, however, more than 3,000 dealers, some of them coming from as far away as New York, rent the 5,800 spaces available at the fairgrounds. Motels are sold out for 30 miles around.

Residents view this congestion as a mixed blessing. Traffic clogs the town's streets, and crowds overwhelm cherished local institutions, such as the Dairy Queen on Service Road. On the other hand, homeowners no longer have to pay property taxes because of the revenues generated by the market.

Veteran observers of the Canton scene say that although many of the shoppers are "regulars"--antique dealers and flea-market addicts--many others are just ordinary folks who are on the prowl for something special. A certain kind of lighting appliance, for example. "Thank God I don't need to look at lamps anymore," says one tired prospector, striding back to her car on a steamy Saturday morning with a gooseneck floor lamp slung over her shoulder.

You can't help wondering why people had all of these things in the first place.

A Chinese machete, a stuffed boar, a World War II German helmet with a large bullet hole, bleached cow skulls, a Texas-size chair made out of cattle horns . . .

Everywhere you look you see American icons.

Elvis painted on black velvet, an achingly lovely photograph of Marilyn Monroe, a mounted magazine advertisement describing how a youthful-looking Ronald Reagan discovered V-8 juice . . .

Even children are thrilled to come upon reminders of their abbreviated pasts.

Cabbage Patch dolls, tricycles, Desert Storm trading cards, Barbie dolls, Nintendo games . . .

Although it seems they've always been with us, flea markets didn't really start catching on in most parts of the country until the late 1940s and early '50s. People have been buying, selling and trading around Canton, however, for close to a century and a half. In the 1850s, circuit-court judges began to hear cases there on the first Monday of each month. At that same time, stray horses that had been rounded up on the range the previous month were being auctioned off. Eventually, Canton became famous for miles around as a place to

Photographs by Will van Overbeek

Charles Engelmann shows off brown leghorn rooster for sale at the animal mart near First Monday market.

buy, sell or swap horses, hound dogs and other animals. That tradition is still alive on a grassy tract near the fairgrounds, a place called Dog Town.

Dee Worthington from Valliant, Oklahoma, sells exotic geese and ducks there. Charles Engelmann of Cooks Point, Texas, a big, soft-spoken man in a straw cowboy hat, sells doves, hens, pigs and hound dogs. Today Engelmann has a litter of Southern blackmouth curs and, with no prompting at all, he expounds on their virtues. "It's an all-around farm-and-hunting dog," he says. "And they do like to hunt hogs." He has the snapshots to prove it—a pack of his hounds harrying a 250-pound boar in the Arkansas woods.

You can't get a hound dog at the First Monday flea market—animals aren't allowed—but a stuffed and mounted timber wolf is a real possibility, and so is just about anything else you can imagine, including a new husband or wife. According to local lore, two married couples who met at the fairgrounds not long ago took a liking to each other. They found a circuit-court judge who promptly unharnessed them, changed the teams and hitched them up again.

Bubble-gum dispensers, meat grinders, a restored cash register, fishing rods, horse collars, pie plates, quilts, coffeepots, teapots . . .

Got a medical problem? There are plenty of cures for what ails you here, although not necessarily the ones eight out of ten doctors might endorse. You can get an udder cream that the vendor insists is for people as well as for milk cows and goats. "Gets rid of rashes better'n anything else," he says.

A few aisles away, Stan Harris, from Garland, near Dallas, is setting up to sell MYO Muscle Creme. According to his sign, it "relieves pain due to: arthritis, headache, sinus, tension, sore muscles, lumbago, neuralgia, strains, backache, bruises, stress sprains, insect bites, and ant stings." That last malady draws notice in East Texas, where nasty little red ants are a menace. When Harris buttonholes a passer-by, the man tells him he doesn't have any pains to try the product on. Harris smiles, walks back to his truck and returns with a hand-lettered sign and a hammer. "If you don't have pain now," the sign says, "use hammer to create pain. Then use MYO Creme for rapid relief."

Most people don't come to Canton for a cure, but a lot come to do their Christmas shopping. That's why the last three or four months of the year are the busiest ones. The flea market offers items the local shopping malls just don't carry.

A hood ornament for a '56 Chevy, parking meters, milk bottles, schoolroom desks, a truckful of flashing traffic lights . . .

Why do people buy these things? The reasons are as varied as the merchandise. Take those stoplights. Tom White brought them here from his hometown, Amarillo, Texas, after the city put them up for sale. He has them priced at $90 apiece. He just sold one to a couple who intend to install it outside their bedroom door. When they signal their wish for privacy, they told White, they want it to have the force of law. Apparently even youngsters think twice about running a red light.

But it's not just the practical utility of things that attracts folks to flea markets. It's the emotions and memories the objects stir up. One comment you hear over and over again as you stroll among the First Monday booths is: "Hey, we had one just like that when I was a kid." Or "Grandma had that very same thing." A lot of the stuff isn't old enough to qualify as antique. It goes under the heading "collectibles"—things your parents used when you were a child, and then sold at a garage sale after you moved out (SMITHSONIAN, November 1980). Collectibles carry us back to the time when we were young. "It's all about nostalgia," says Jane Carter, who sells old furniture in a rented building under the Canton water tower. "People like to re-create that safe, warm place they had when they were kids."

That's why JD Dorsey (those aren't initials: "JD" is his name) is able to make a living by restoring and selling pedal cars, those pint-size copies of American automobiles from the 1930s and '40s. JD, who lives in Azle, Texas, calls himself "the Texas Pedal Car Peddler." He's retired from the Army and used to sell old automobile parts. About six years ago, at a flea market, he bought a pedal car for $50, and before he'd gone 30 steps he'd resold it for $85. "I was hooked," he says. He's been in the pedal-car business ever since and even

Mr. Breslin's previous articles for SMITHSONIAN *were about Irish storytellers and the Maya oral tradition of southern Mexico. He resides in Washington, D.C.*

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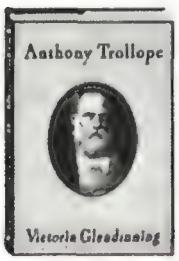

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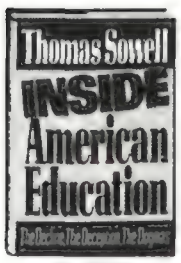

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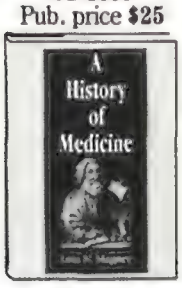

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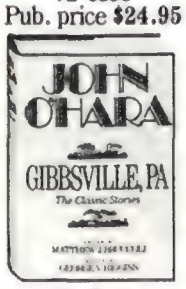

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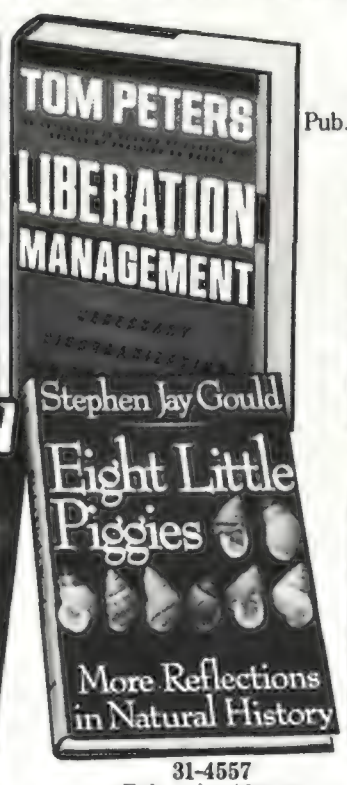

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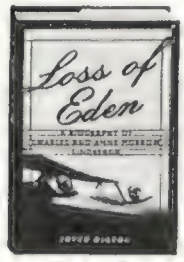

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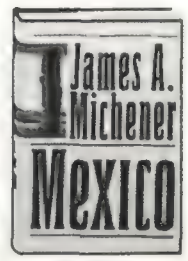

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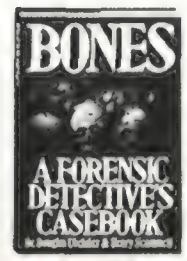

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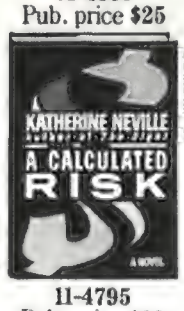

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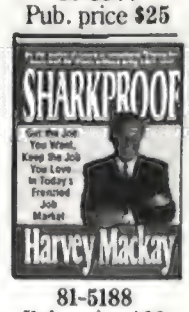

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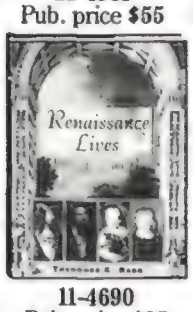

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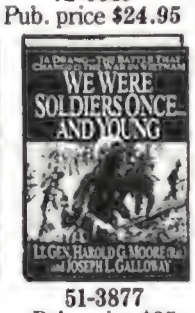

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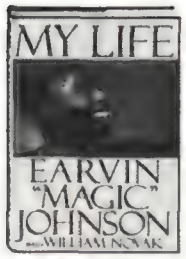

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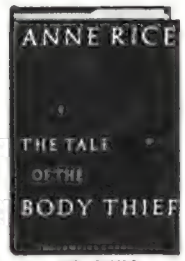

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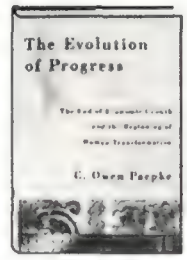

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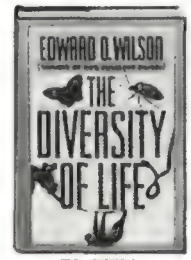

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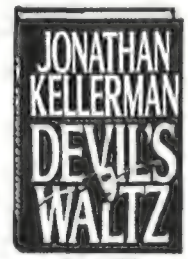

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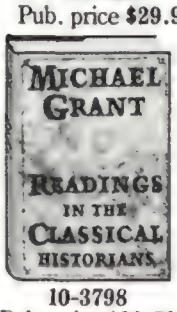

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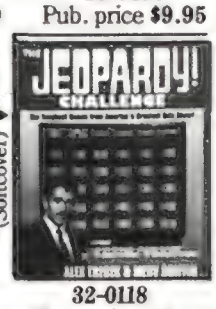

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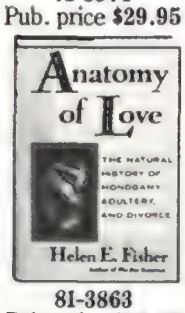

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A place where you can get anything

built a trailer to hold his tools and parts. He hauls it all around the Southwest to some 25 flea markets and swap meets a year.

"Pedal cars are hot now," JD says. "These are toys for grown-ups. They sell for hundreds of dollars. People buy them as conversation pieces or to make coffee tables out of them. But mainly they buy them because they had them when they were kids."

Like JD's gleaming little vehicles, many of the things for sale at the First Monday market are vestiges of America's manufacturing heyday. They also remind us that much of our industrial prowess has gone south. Pedal cars, for example, are no longer made in this country but in Mexico.

A brass buggy lantern, a Winchester rifle, a coal shovel, small brass tags with men's names stamped on them, an iron stove from a Great Northern railroad depot, a Cajun wardrobe from the 18th century made out of an old musket case . . .

When you look at many of these things or run your fingers over them—like these brass name tags the Works Progress Administration used to keep track of tools when it put the unemployed to work—the hardships of the Depression take on a human dimension. When you ask Jane Carter why the Cajun wardrobe she is selling has a hand-forged ring on top, her explanation—the ring was used to hang the wardrobe, and the clothing in it, off the floor when the rising Mississippi River backed into the bayous—makes the essence of a particular place almost palpable. This is why the flea market is sort of a grass-roots museum where little pieces of the nation's story are presented and passed on.

Stanford Harris, formerly a dealer in antique oak furniture, now peddles a salve used for "pain relief."

Buying, selling, trading, remembering

The flea market also reminds us of words that are disappearing from our everyday vocabulary as technology marches on. We use washing machines now, and trusty old rippled washboards might well have disappeared altogether were it not for places like First Monday. Cars replaced horse-drawn buggies, but you can still find a buggy jack here. We can show such relics to our children at the flea market, so they at least have some inkling of what we mean when we mutter about "washboard roads" or persist in calling refrigerators "iceboxes" and automobiles "buggies."

A restored Magnolia Gasoline Company pump, coin-operated Coca-Cola dispensers from the 1950s, enormous jukeboxes full of 45 rpm records . . .

Ken Daniels raises cattle near Shreveport, Louisiana, but his hobby is collecting, restoring and selling coin-operated reminders of America's fascination with machines. "I buy more than I sell," he says, "and I like to trade more than anything."

Reminders of America's racial problems are on display here, too, in collections of porcelain Aunt Jemimas and magazine advertisements in which African-Americans appear only as waiters. There are other artifacts of racial history that extend well beyond our own borders. Larry Sandlin, sporting a black top hat and a turquoise necklace with his T-shirt, sells 19th-century handguns. When a customer asks him about a powerful-looking .455 Webley revolver, Sandlin, an ex-military man from Grand Prairie, Texas, launches into a minihistory of the Zulu wars in South Africa. "The Zulu warriors wore breastplates that the British handgun bullets couldn't pierce," Sandlin explains. "So the British Army had Webley produce this big-caliber pistol." The customer eventually decides not to buy, but he thanks Sandlin for the history lesson.

After overhearing a number of exchanges like this, an eavesdropper may begin to appreciate how rare

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Joyce Chavez holds turn-of-century toy produced by the A. Schoenhut Company, a Pennsylvania firm. Made of wood, with a plaster face, such a doll is routinely sold by antique dealers for between $300 and $400.

they have become in our lives. These days we shop in malls staffed, for the most part, by people who know how to pass an item over the electronic scanner but from whom questions often elicit expressions of alarm or utter blankness. At the flea market, the sellers are often experts who know a lot about the objects they acquire. Moreover, most of them are happy to spend time imparting what they know to anyone who asks.

Many flea-market vendors are nonconformists. As such, they embody an attitude that is the antithesis of the shopping-mall culture. They are talkers and dreamers and scholars. They run the loner's gamut from ex-hippy to ex-soldier. "The mainstream's not for me," shrugs Larry Sandlin.

Sandlin's partner is known as "Trash Alley Sally" or "the Knob Lady." She sells Depression-era glass and cabinet knobs. Down the aisle is "Marie the Bead Lady." Like these two, many vendors prefer not to use their real names—the aim is to maintain a raffish air. In other cases, more practical considerations may also enter in. State inspectors visit the flea market, and vendors are required to have a Texas sales-tax permit. But the market, as one vendor observed with an ambiguous wink, "is one of the last places where you can still steal a buck from the government."

Some of the vendors have full-time jobs in places like Dallas, Houston and Shreveport. For others, the market is a way of life, and they use the time in between sale days looking for, learning about and restoring collectibles. Still others, like Francis Moses, from Hope, Arkansas, make their own items. She sells stuffed dolls wearing quilted clothes that she and her partner sew themselves. She informs customers that President Bill Clinton was raised six blocks away from her house.

Whatever part, large or small, the flea market plays in their lives, the vendors insist that it's hard work. "These people are like pioneers," says seller Jane Carter. "They're tough. No sissies out here. We go through rain and ice."

Rain is almost a tradition. "It never fails," says Marshall Ragle, a frequent visitor who runs an auto-body shop and a bed-and-breakfast a few miles from Canton. The fairgrounds is located mainly in a floodplain, and Ragle has seen tents floating down the creek. Al Campbell, who manages First Monday for the town of Canton, says, "There's a joke in Dallas about the weather. Get on Interstate 20 and head east till it starts raining. That's First Monday."

Rain or shine, vendors start lining up early to claim their favorite spot at the fairgrounds. One recent

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David Uzzel, coproprietor with his brother Richard of lemonade stands, provides refreshment with a smile.

Thursday morning at 7, while lightning flickered on the horizon, hundreds of cars, station wagons, pickups, vans, delivery trucks, horse trailers, U-Haul and Ryder rentals, Airstreams and refitted school buses could be seen wheeling through the live oaks. In less than two hours, despite the rain that had begun to splatter the dust into mud, the anxious sellers had erected aluminum frames and stretched tent shelters over them, and were beginning to lay out their wares. Sleepy-eyed little girls in nightdresses wandered from trailers; women stretched, and shook their hair. Soon there was four inches of water on some of the roads, and RVs produced rooster tails as they rolled through.

Sausage-on-a-stick, smoked turkey legs, nachos, lemonade, funnel cakes, catfish, Indian fry bread, roasted ears of corn, tacos and enchiladas, baked potatoes, limeade, pork chops, ice cream . . .

Are you hungry yet? There are 180 food concessions here, and 800 more concessionaires are waiting for an opening, according to Al Campbell. David Uzzel (above) and his brother Richard, from Dallas, started selling lemonade at Canton 15 years ago. One night a prankster turned all of the signs at their five stands upside down. They didn't notice when they opened for business the next day, but their customers did. The upside-down signs became their trademark.

Janice Musgrave works at one of the Uzzels' stands, squeezing lemons over ice into a big plastic cup. The first drink costs $1.50, but it's only $1 for a refill if you bring the cup back. You see hundreds of people walking around under the Texas sun carrying big cups.

Rodney Kamel, a friendly, heavy-set caterer with a towel over his shoulder, has been running a big food stand at First Monday for nearly 30 years. He's from Tyler, 40 miles east of Canton, where he serves as a city councilman and as mayor pro tem. "I was the first to introduce sausage-on-a-stick here," he says proudly, "and turkey legs and nachos."

Like everyone else, Kamel has his own you-can-get-anything-here story. Several years ago he bought a used feed scale, but it was short a 50-pound slab of iron, or "half-weight." On a hellishly hot day, he and a friend began to scour the fairgrounds in search of a weight to replace the one that was missing. Finally, late in the afternoon, they found just what they were looking for. The friend was elated that their long search was over, but Kamel maintained a poker face. His bargaining instincts were taking over. The vendor wanted $2.50. Kamel discovered several shortcomings in the chunk of metal and offered $1.50. The seller hung tough at $1.75, but Kamel, by no means willing to give up, shifted gears. "Is this the only color you have in half-weights?" he asked. The seller calmly allowed that it was, but when Kamel noticed the expression of disbelief on his companion's face, he relented and closed the deal. Bargaining is expected at a flea market—that's at least half the fun—but not past the point where your friend keels over from heatstroke.

If Retha Nance and her husband, Harry, have their way, long searches like Kamel's could become a thing of the past. Residents of Dublin, Texas, she's worked as a secretary and he spent years in construction. Recently they decided to start up a computerized flea-market directory. They bought a computer, then read a book on how to use it. They plan to carry their database to flea markets from coast to coast to help buyers and sellers all over the country link up. They are at First Monday now, signing up customers for their $15 service. "It's an inexpensive way for people to advertise," Retha says.

As it happens, another couple here has found an even less expensive way to advertise. They are wearing matching signs. His says, "Wanted: Fire Engines." Hers says, "Wanted: Lionel Trains."

It's true. Sooner or later you'll find exactly what you want at a flea market. After four days traipsing around Canton, a journalist from Washington, D.C. finally comes across a gleaming aluminum kitchen sink on the grass in front of a tent. "I was thinking," the writer says to the man behind the table, "that I've seen everything here but the kitchen sink. And now I've seen that."

"It's a new one, too," the vendor says hopefully.

Craig Asberry holds up turkey leg, sausage, at Rodney Kamel's barbecue stand, a fixture at Canton for years.

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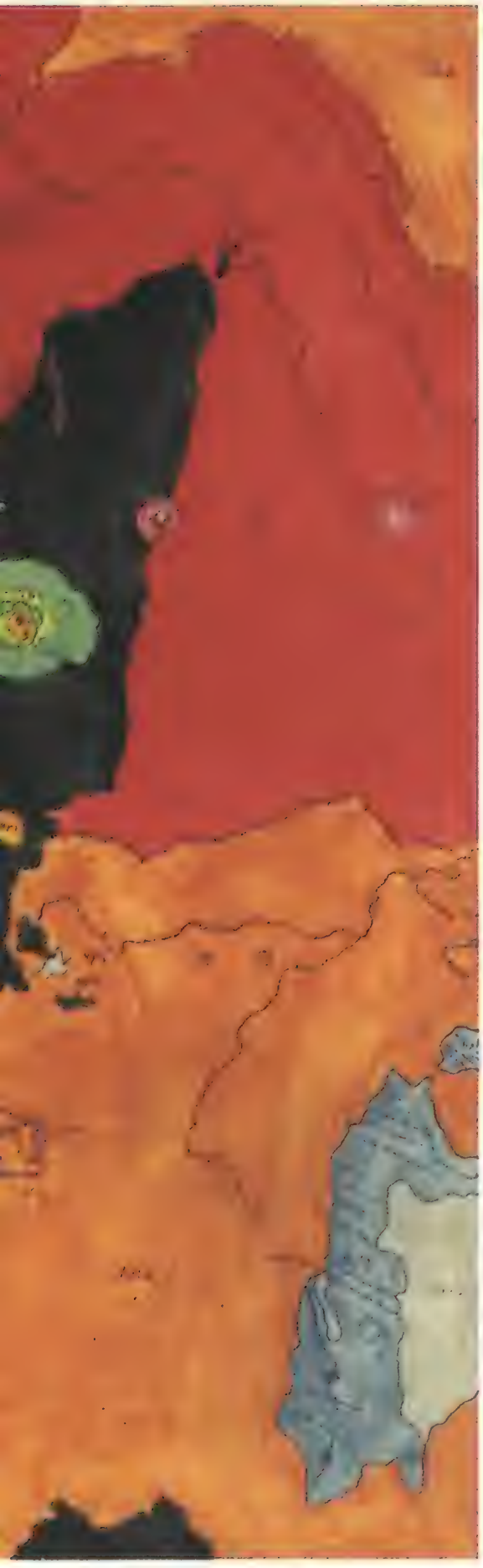
More than a guide to place or a definition of boundary, maps present information selectively, shaping our view of the world

"Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps," declares Marlow in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness.* "I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map . . . I would put my finger on it and say, 'When I grow up I will go there.' "

Maps cover the globe; they are ubiquitous. Part of the fabric of our lives, they chart our paths along the highways, the byways, the subways, the skyways of our own particular universes. From valleys on Mars to storms on Earth; from satellite views of our vanishing rain forests to an ancient clay tablet etched with the outlines of fields; from road maps to star maps; from the cities of yesterday to the cities of tomorrow—maps guide and inform us. They inspire and direct our journeys, expand the boundaries of our minds, chronicle civilizations, evoke the past, encapsulate the present and envisage the future. As aviator-author Beryl Markham once wrote, "A map says to you, 'Read me carefully, follow me closely, doubt me not . . . I am the earth in the palm of your hand.'"

A major exhibition at the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt National Museum of Design in New York City now gives us yet another take on maps. "The Power of Maps," on view through March 7, examines their significance as instruments of power, persuasion and control. The show presents an illuminating wealth of maps from different times and cultures, representing a variety of world views and agendas—from a 16th-century B.C. map of the Babylonian city of Nippur to a contemporary supercomputer map of the ozone hole over Antarctica; from a 1513 map documenting the voyages of Columbus to a 19th-century native-American star chart. More than 300 maps of surprising diversity demonstrate how these powerful visual tools establish and promote points of view and serve special interests. Visitors are even invited to create their own maps, with their own agendas, using computer stations equipped with state-of-the-art Geographic Information Systems software.

"Every map is someone's way of getting you to look at the world his or her way," maintains exhibit cocurator Lucy Fellowes. "Despite an aura of neutrality, maps present information selectively, shaping our percep-



Geological map (1988) of Southern Mangala Valles area of Mars was hand drawn using data from interplanetary spacecraft. Browns, grays, represent ancient crust; the reds show lava flow.

Oldest map in the exhibit, clay tablet, c. 1500 B.C., shows fields belonging to royal estates in Nippur, religious center of Babylonia. Such maps were likely used to settle property disputes.

tions of the world." Maps promoting tourism, for example, are apt to feature landmarks rather than landfills, recreational parks rather than industrial parks.

And what enables maps to advance a cause so effectively? According to the show's cocurator Denis Wood, it is "the impression they manage to convey that they are precisely above such interest. They are convincing because the interest they serve is masked."

Maps allow for the discovery of patterns as well as places. An 1854 map of London, for instance, made during a cholera epidemic by physician John Snow, plots the incidence of deaths from the disease. The resulting pattern enabled Snow to link the spread of cholera to a water pump in central London.

Maps connect us to place in many different, binding ways. In experience and in memory, in history and in law, says Fellowes, "they enable us to see where we are now, where we have not yet been, and where we want to be. By seeing maps for what they really are, by understanding their persuasive power, we can go on to use them to make sense of the world and our place in it."

Diane M. Bolz

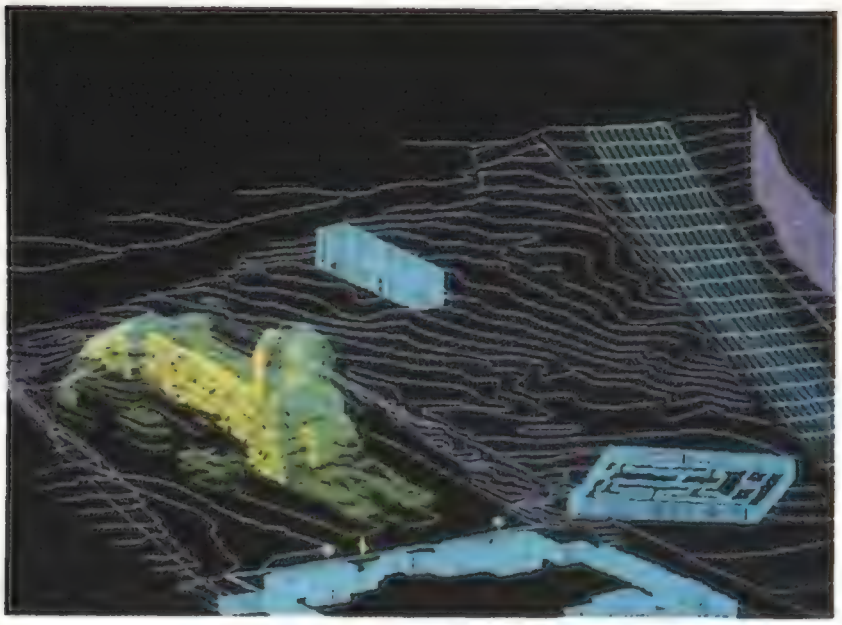
Genealogy and family property are described in pictorial map from Xochimilco, Mexico (1576). Document is type made in Aztec Mexico prior to Spanish Conquest and may relate to litigation. It identifies Don Miguel Damian, a royal person, probably deceased, his family, holdings. Don Miguel and his wife are at bottom, with four children above them and an illegitimate child to the right.

Souvenir silk handkerchief from 1939 World's Fair in New York City depicts the fair's layout and theme, the "World of Tomorrow." Map was one of thousands of mementos merchandised for the event, an ambitious showcase for American business and industry. Focal point of fair, the Trylon and Perisphere, are at the lower center. Such keepsakes picture the past and evoke experience.

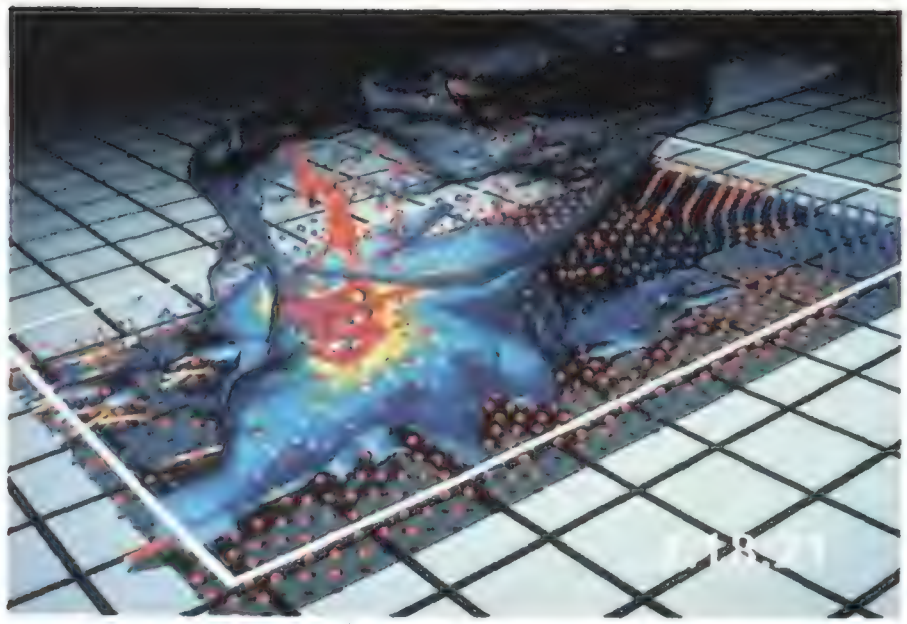
Pleated fan (c. 1803) was made to promote French engineer Martin de La Bastide's proposal for canal across Spanish colony of Nicaragua.

Appeal was made to King Carlos IV of Spain. Map and text depict the strategic and economic advantages of creating this transoceanic link.

Map by noted cartographer Richard Edes Harrison presents an unconventional look at the Middle East, turning our normal perspective upside down. Here, geography of the Middle East (top center) is seen from the vantage point of Eastern Europe. One of a series of hand-drawn maps made for a 1944 atlas designed to show spatial relationships of key places in a world at war, map was meant to stimulate readers' perceptions.

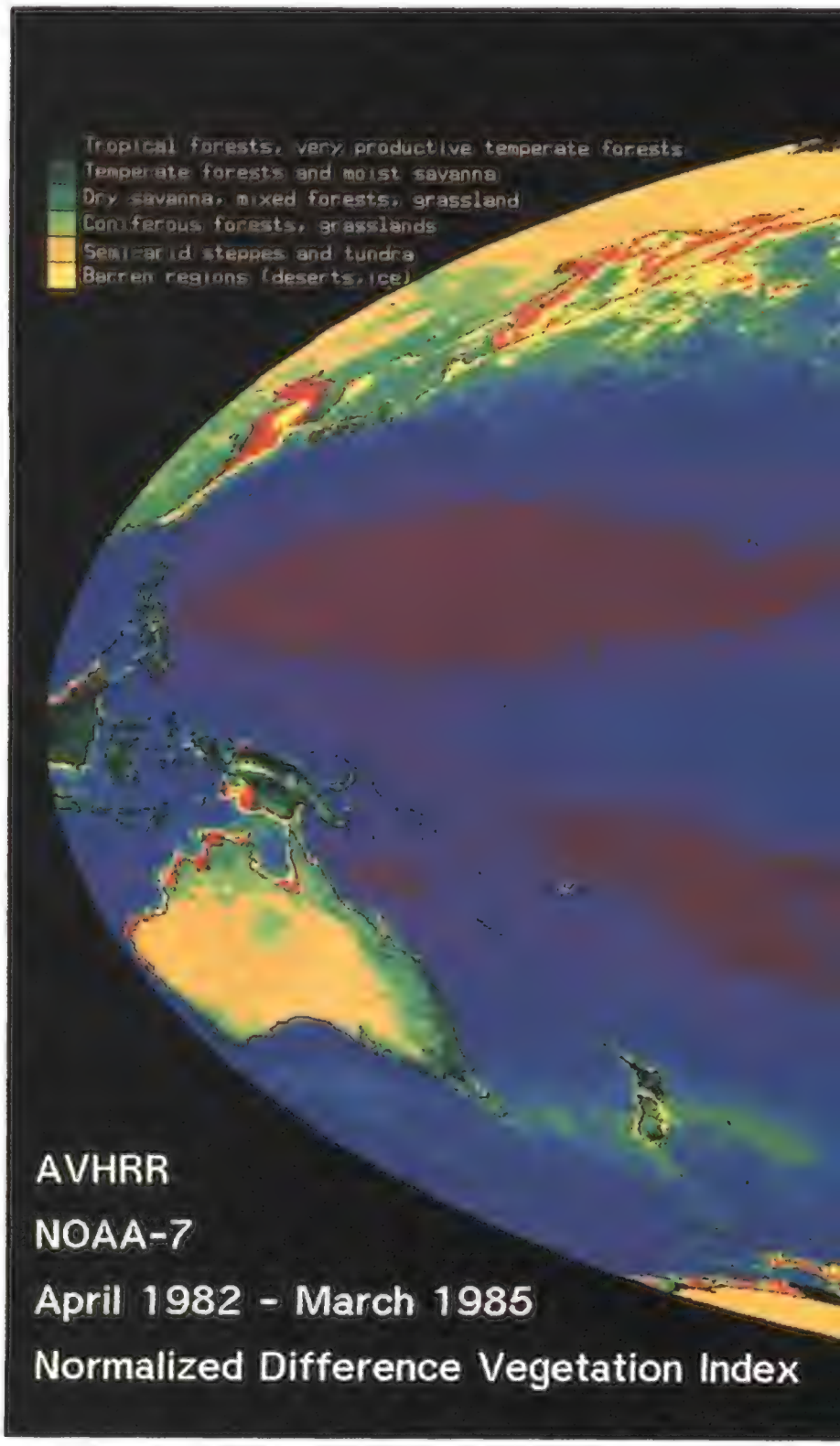


Three-dimensional computer model of the Sphinx and Giza plateau was made using digitized contour maps and drawings by American Egyptologist Mark Lehner.



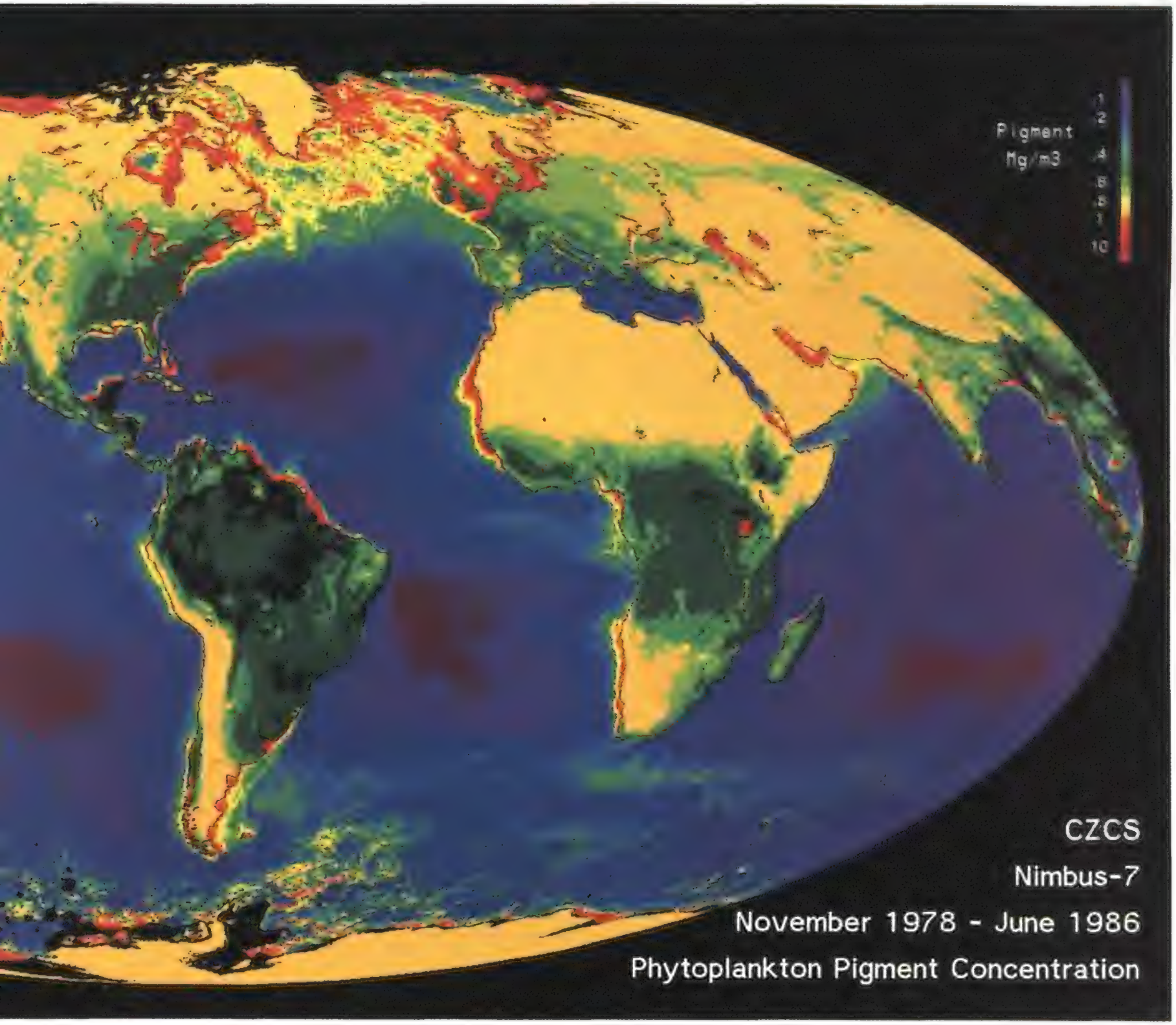
Animated simulation of a numerically modeled severe storm was done by supercomputer. Image illustrates air turbulence. Orange shows rising air; blue, sinking.

Memory board, or *lukasa*, an encoded map in form of a memory device, was used by the Bambudye, a secret society of the Luba culture of Zaire. This type, from 19th century, relates to people and place, conveying lore about cultural heroes, mythical migration routes, early rulers and dwelling places of ancestral spirits.



Traditional medieval diagram of the world (1475) superimposes Christian history and popular mythology on known continents: Asia, in upper half; Europe, Africa, below. Landforms, man-made structures, look European, making unknown world familiar.

Computer-generated image of biosphere shows chlorophyll concentrations of oceans and vegetation patterns of continents. Map was created by NASA from satellite data measuring energy reflected from vegetation. On land, dark green represents rain forests.



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Now, we won't waste your time explaining what "swaps" are and how they work. That would take an ad twice as long as this.

But we will tell you that the money we raise through such financial transactions is used to fund something critically important to us all—higher education in America.

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Okay, so what does all this complex financial stuff have to do with higher education, or, to put it in even broader terms, post-secondary education?

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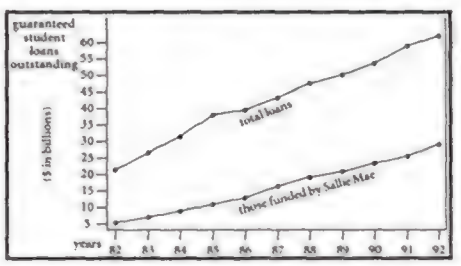

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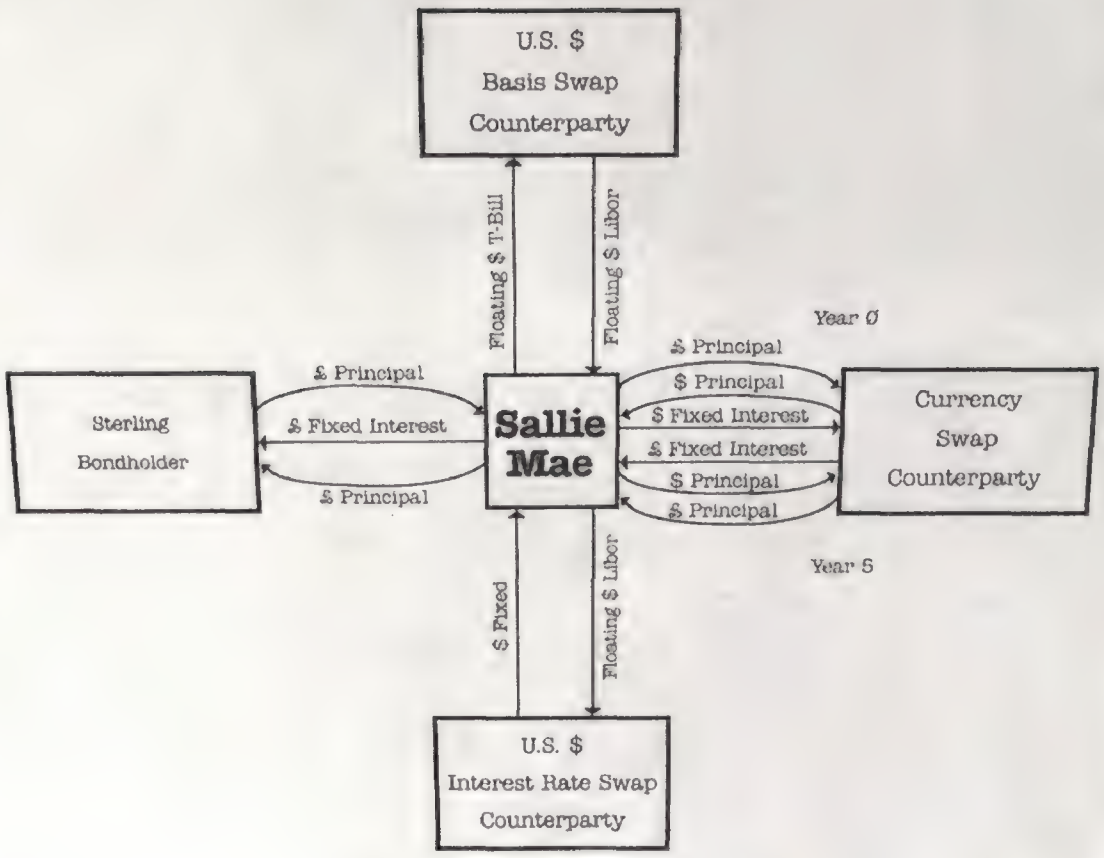
We don't lend directly to students or parents. But they do benefit directly.

Working with banks, state higher education authorities, guarantors, and schools, we financed some $9 billion of the $80 billion students and their families paid for higher education in 1991-92.

Most of our financing is for student loans. But we also



provide funds for loans to parents who are putting their kids through college. And Health Education Assistance Loans for prospective health care professionals.

Even people who tap into their home equity or take out personal loans for college may be using funds provided by Sallie Mae.

All told, more than 6.5 million borrowers rely on Sallie Mae for loans to finance every kind of education. At schools all across the country.

Some students need money for just one or two semesters.

Some are going to trade school.

Some are getting their master's or doctoral degrees.

Post-Secondary Education Costs Borne By Students And Families In 1991-92

- *$80 billion total*
- *$9 billion through Sallie Mae*

And others are learning new workplace skills at their community college.

Sallie Mae also helps schools. Some 200 colleges in 38 states have received nearly $2.5 billion for the construction or renovation of buildings, research labs, libraries, and classrooms. And to purchase essential teaching tools like computers, telescopes, even pianos.

With so many people and institutions depending on us for funds, we employ some of the best financial talent in the world.

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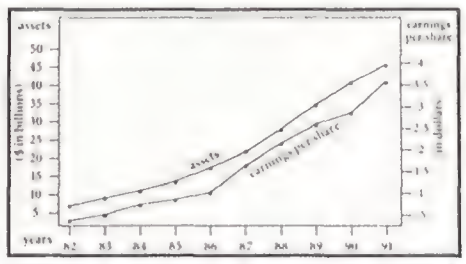
It doesn't take a Ph.D. in finance to know that money doesn't grow on trees. But money does grow. And few companies have been growing it as intelligently and prudently as ours.

We have nearly $50 billion in assets.

We're one of just a handful of financial services companies in the country to have a AAA balance sheet.

And through sound, conservative balance sheet management and marketplace innovation, we consistently generate returns that keep private capital flowing in, no matter what kind of economic conditions prevail.

All of which attracts some of the smartest private capital investors in the world to invest in Sallie Mae.



Sallie Mae's consistent performance fuels investing which in turn supports more student credit

And that money finances higher education right here. In America.

No matter what America's future education finance needs will be, Sallie Mae will continue to focus the full power of private capital markets on meeting them.

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In cavernous, glass-enclosed Sutro Baths, crowds test waters of largest indoor saltwater pool complex, 1913. The biggest, an L-shaped tank 300 feet long, 175 feet wide, was kept at a quite bracing ocean temperature.

Sutro advocated swimming as everyman's exercise: "It is invigorating and keeps circulation free and quick."

By Donald Dale Jackson

One man's soaring, stately pleasure dome for the people

The audacious and egalitarian Adolph Sutro created his grand-scale namesake baths as an opulent playground for all San Francisco

If he had paused to savor the moment—as he stood at the colonnaded entrance to the wondrous pleasure dome that bore his name, on the blustery March day in 1896 that it officially opened—the stately, side-whiskered Adolph Sutro might have reflected that he had at last done everything he'd set out to do. Sutro Baths, which spread out before him in cavernous, multicorridored and glass-roofed splendor just a few yards from the thundering surf of the Golden Gate, was the crowning glory that exemplified the man: outsize, original and marked by his characteristic blend of rigidly high standards and the common touch.

Sutro was a German immigrant who became one of the most prominent men in the West in the last third of the 19th century. He was a self-educated engineer who got rich by building a tunnel into Nevada's Comstock Lode, a high-profile businessman who owned one-twelfth of San Francisco, a reluctant and ham-handed politician who was one of history's unhappiest mayors, a philanthropist who may have been the softest touch in the West, and an ahead-of-his-time conservationist. In San Francisco he was and remains something of a hero, albeit largely unsung. He was also, always, a dreamer—and a stubborn foe in a fight.

More than most of us, Sutro was a mélange of seeming contradictions. He was both a gifted capitalist in an era of rampant greed and a quasi socialist who was elected mayor as a Populist and urged public works to end unemployment. He hobnobbed with the likes of President Benjamin Harrison, William Jennings Bryan

and Andrew Carnegie, but for years took his meals with his servants.

Courtly in manner and devoted to his six children, he nonetheless made two appearances on the front pages as a philanderer, once after an unseemly brawl between his wife and another woman. Always generous with his money, he was extraordinarily demanding to work for and unbudgeable in argument—"obstinate as two mules," a friend said.

When he strode forth amid fluttering flags and orchestral flourishes to speak at the opening of the baths, he had just won his latest battle, a bitter squabble with the Southern Pacific Railroad over trolley fare from downtown San Francisco to the Cliff House (which he also owned) and the baths next door. (Even today, visitors to the city can take in the ocean view over meals at the current incarnation of the Cliff House.)

The 65-year-old Sutro had vanquished the Southern Pacific and assured a low fare by building his own streetcar line. But as he gazed out at the crowd of 7,000 that filled only a part of the vast structure, Sutro was thinking less about corporate skirmishes than classical comparisons. There were great baths in ancient Rome, he declared, but "I think I may honestly say that our baths here need fear no comparison." He expressed his hope that the baths would provide "health-giving amusement" that would equip people for the "struggles of life."

View of Sutro's domain in 1894 shows powerhouse (foreground), massive baths structure (center), and his own hilltop residence rising in the distance.

Flanked by sculptures he installed, Sutro surveys his extensive properties.

Sutro's lifelong endorsement of swimming may have sprung from the famed hot sulfur baths in his hometown of Aachen, Germany, where his father was a wealthy clothing manufacturer and the Sutros inhabited a 20-room mansion. Young Adolph was mechanically adept and fond of books, but he was forced to quit school at 16 after his father was paralyzed in a carriage accident, dying within the year.

In 1850 his mother decided to take 20-year-old Adolph and all but one of his ten siblings to America. Adolph tarried only a week in New York before booking passage for gold-rush California via Panama.

Arriving in San Francisco, he became a commission merchant, buying and selling whatever was available until he eventually owned three tobacco shops. When gold and silver were discovered in Nevada in 1860 Sutro sold his businesses and lit out for the Comstock, where he became friendly with a journeyman-reporter named Sam Clemens.

On one occasion the two men shared a stagecoach ride during which the writer tried to coax a laugh out of the stolid Sutro, to no avail. "I don't think Sutro minds a joke of mild character," Clemens reported, "any more than a dead man would."

Thoughtful and energetic if not fun-loving, Sutro hit on the idea of a tunnel into Virginia City's mountain of ore. A tunnel, he reasoned, would provide ventilation and drainage, permit access to ore at deeper levels, and offer an escape route for miners in case of fire or flood. It could also, of course, make him wealthy, a possibility he had not overlooked.

Derided at first as "Crazy Sutro" and "the Great Bore," he spent years raising money for the tunnel. (In his day, tunnel construction on a massive scale was considered to be an exercise in audacious engineering. Great ventures like Switzerland's St. Gotthard railroad tunnel were being built at the same time.) He also had to fight the mine owners and bankers who opposed him. (Those interests wanted their own railroad to reap the profits to be made from transporting ore out of the mine.) Four-mile-long Sutro Tunnel, the first of many landmarks that would bear the Sutro name, was begun in 1869 and completed nine

Donald Dale Jackson, who grew up only four miles from Sutro Baths, ice-skated (but didn't swim) there.

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ONE IN A SERIES

Until November 3, 1992 a place called Hope might never have appeared in the World Almanac, except for its prize-winning watermelons. But on that November day the town of Hope, Arkansas joined Independence, Missouri and Abilene, Kansas and over thirty other small towns that have sent their sons to the White House. Seems that small towns have a way of bringing up youngsters with virtues Americans admire – like realism about the present, optimism about the future, and the determination to get things done. Over the years, we ourselves have learned what small towns and rural communities can do. Back when our homes had no electric light or power, we rolled up our sleeves and went to work. We built the nation's rural electric co-ops, and lit up the countryside. We've had our sleeves rolled up ever since, helping with all kinds of imaginative efforts to stimulate local economies, create jobs, improve health care, and strengthen education. From a tradition of cooperation and community spirit deeply rooted in millions of members across the nation, rural electric co-ops are continuing to show how the country gets things done – with new ideas, new energy, and, sure enough, new hope.

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years later, after a monumental effort.

A year after the tunnel opened, a story appeared in a San Francisco newspaper with this headline: "Scandal in High Life: Virginia City Society Shocked by a Marital Infelicity." Sutro's wife, Leah, readers learned, had caught Adolph in the hotel room of a Mrs. Allen, a woman from Washington, D.C. known in Virginia City as "the $90,000 diamond widow," who had apparently been acquainted with Sutro for some years.

Mrs. Sutro first bashed the widow in the head with a champagne bottle and then retained a lawyer. She had Virginia City's sympathy, the paper said, because she had stood by her husband in his struggling days. Though they remained married, the Sutros never again lived together.

Sutro had made a tentative foray into politics when he failed to win a U.S. Senate seat from Nevada in 1874. He made another attempt in 1880, and when he lost again he cashed in his Nevada chips, quietly selling all his tunnel stock for an estimated $700,000, and decamped for San Francisco. His timing was impeccable because the stock began to tumble soon afterward, and the company folded in 1889; the low-level ore had turned out to be low-grade too. Sutro was by then well embarked on a new career as a combination real estate mogul, grandiose builder and civic benefactor in San Francisco.

Adolph and his oldest daughter, Emma, were taking a leisurely buggy ride one day in 1881 when they suddenly came onto a bluff overlooking the ocean at the point where the Pacific meets the Golden Gate. He knew immediately that this spectacular site was where he wanted to live; he made an offer on the spot for a small house atop the cliff that would soon be called Sutro Heights. Next he bought the nearby Cliff House and the adjoining land at Point Lobos (not to be confused with the more famous Point Lobos, south of Carmel) where the baths would rise.

Sutro built imposing new Cliff House after landmark burned to ground in 1894.

He kept buying until he owned thousands of acres between downtown San Francisco and the ocean, a treeless expanse of billowing dunes mocked as "Sutro's sand-dune folly."

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But, as always, he had a plan. He had Bermuda and bent grass planted on the dunes to stabilize the soil.

Then he imported hundreds of thousands of tree seedlings—fir and cypress from Europe, eucalyptus from Australia—and organized mass plantings on the peak then called Mount Parnassus (later, of course, Mount Sutro), at the Presidio and on Yerba Buena Island in San Francisco Bay. The resultant forest on Mount Sutro ultimately grew with such abandon that the world's first urban logging camp and sawmill were built there in the 1930s.

With his cottony sideburns, his erect bearing and his bright, opal-colored eyes, Sutro cut a grand figure in 1880s San Francisco. He did nothing small or second-class. When he wasn't dazzling the city he was touring Europe, toting his collapsible bathtub to ensure cleanliness and buying carloads of rare books. He eventually amassed a collection of some 250,000 books and pamphlets, including a number of rare 15th-century volumes; much of his library would be lost in the 1906 earthquake and fire.

Despite his wealth he was always approachable and invariably courteous. He gave money to practically anyone who asked, dipping into a special purse filled with gold coins when beseeched on the street. He objected only to the woeful narratives that often preceded a request.

When hard times beset San Francisco he bought large blocks of Salvation Army bed-and-meal tickets and gave them to the men who stood in line outside his office. When his rich but less charitable friends asked him how he could distinguish the deserving poor from besotted idlers, Sutro replied that he couldn't, but he believed that "men are made desperate by hunger."

Sutro began transforming the Cliff House-Point Lobos area as soon as he moved in. He expanded the Sutro Heights house, built a parapet at the edge of the cliff and lined it with copies of sculptures he had admired in Europe. The Cliff House, previously somewhat seedy, became a respectable family resort. He grew attached to the seals that basked on the offshore rocks and led a movement to protect them that resulted in the passage of one of our earliest wildlife protection laws.

Hospitable if not overly social—"I can spend hours alone and not be a particle lonely," he said—Sutro nonetheless enjoyed hosting soirées at the Heights for eminent visitors. The 40 guests who joined Sutro and President Harrison for lunch in 1891 had California oysters, roast chicken and duck, five different wines and an 1825 cognac.

The idea that eventually evolved into Sutro Baths was hatched during the hours Sutro spent watching waves smack the Point Lobos rocks, creating tidal pools where the water had

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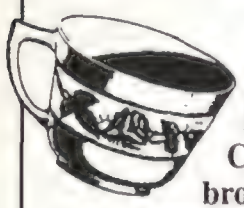

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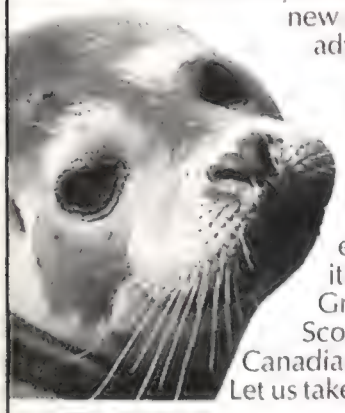

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scooped trenches in the rock. With a little creative engineering, he mused, he could make an outdoor aquarium where folks could inspect creatures borne in from the sea.

Such an aquarium would require enlarging, deepening and walling the tidal pools, erecting a breakwater and tunneling through 153 feet of rock—no problem for the man who bored Sutro Tunnel. The principle was exquisitely simple: fish and other aquatic life would flow into the aquarium through the tunnel at high tide and remain there when a gate blocked their exit; excess water would drain out through an underwater outlet.

The problem turned out to be the breakwater. First one concrete wall, and then a second, sank into the sand. By the time the third wall took hold atop the other two, the Lord of the Heights had a new and more exciting idea. If the tunnel could channel salt water to an aquarium, why not a saltwater bathhouse?

It must have struck Sutro as he meditated on the baths that here was the perfect cap to his career. Sutro the friend of the common man would make baths cheap, with transportation accessible to anyone with a nickel for carfare. Sutro the scientist-collector would fill the halls with plants and museum exhibits—stuffed animals, mummies, statuary. For the children there would be carnival rides and Barnumesque exotica like Tom Thumb's bed. Sutro the impresario—a new incarnation—would stage shows and concerts and circus events, and find dozens of creative ways to use swimming pools for entertainment.

As the great structure on the three-and-a-half-acre site hard by Point Lobos rose in 1891 and '92 he was the ultimate hands-on manager. He handled everything, negotiated personally with every contractor—steel suppliers, plumbers, glass installers, furniture dealers, bathing-suit manufacturers. A surviving letter from the latter (patrons would be required to rent Sutro bathing suits) regrets Sutro's displeasure with the buttons.

By spring of 1894 the bathhouse was close enough to completion for Sutro to show the public what he had wrought. Visitors were stupefied by its scale and luxuriousness. There were seven swimming pools, the largest a vast L-shaped tank 300 feet long and 175 feet wide. Three levels of commodious galleries with broad corridors and hundreds of display cases overlooked the pools. The roof and the

After a whale was stranded on a beach along Sutro's property in 1895, workers preserved it for display in an exhibit intended to lure young visitors.

Celebrities and common folk flocked to the baths: child star Mickey Rooney paddled for publicity in a vessel named for actress Lupe Velez, in 1930s.

ocean side were fitted with 100,000 square feet of glass.

More than 500 private dressing rooms, a tiered grandstand seating 5,300, restaurants on three levels, seven slides and 30 swinging rings from which bathers could splash into tanks holding 1.8 million gallons of water—who could have imagined all this? "The eyes do not seem equal to the seeing of it," a flabbergasted reporter wrote. "The depth and width and light and activity of it seem too much for comprehension." The bathhouse laundry could wash 20,000 swimsuits and 40,000 towels a day. When it was built, Sutro's was the largest indoor saltwater natatorium.

The ecstatic proprietor was particularly pleased with acoustics so sensitive that music sounded "like a dream, soft and waving." He confessed that the baths had cost some $600,000, but declared that he hadn't done it for profit. "If it pays expenses, all right," he said. "If nothing, all right."

The engineering was ingenious. Seawater roared through the tunnel bored for the aquarium to a catch basin, from which it was piped to the baths. The largest tank was kept at ocean temperature, but the five other saltwater pools, aligned in a row (one reserved for women and children), were steam-heated to progressively warmer temperatures; the warmest was called the "soup bowl."

A single freshwater tank was known as the "freezing pool." In an era before filtering systems, the pools were emptied regularly—the water piped out to sea—then refilled. At low tide it took pumps five hours to fill the baths.

The exhibits, which Sutro hoped would "amuse and instruct" and stimulate young minds, included Aztec pottery, Chinese and Japanese swords, medieval armor, totem poles, and stuffed animals that included a jaguar and an anaconda in mortal combat.

Sutro staged several benefit performances at the baths, one of which drew 20,000 people, and permitted VIPs like William Jennings Bryan to take a dip, but he refused to open them officially until he was certain that people could reach the baths for 5 cents. The Southern Pacific—"the

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Enterprising entrepreneurs wanted to cash in on baths' cachet: auto dealer posed models (cars and bathing beauties) outside Sutro complex in 1934.

Octopus" to Sutro—cut its fare to a nickel in late 1894, but Sutro didn't trust the railroad barons and insisted on completing his own red-and-white electric trolley line before formally inaugurating the baths in 1896.

On opening day a 40-piece orchestra on a floating platform performed Beethoven's "Dedication of the House" as violets fluttered onto Sutro's ever-present white hat. A newspaper account said the old man wore "a look of complete satisfaction."

Sutro recognized that the baths had to offer more than wholesome exercise and uplift: there had to be pizzazz too. In an era of tightrope walking and Niagara Falls barrel riding, he needed similar marvels and exploits—aquatic if at all possible—for the delectation of the customers who paid a dime to get in and a quarter to swim.

The baths presented circus performers such as "Charmion, the greatest girl aerialist in the world" and "Oro and Bell, the mirthful comedy acrobats," but the smash hits at the beach were the water acts. "Professor Karl," billed as "the marvelous Anthropic Amphibian," was somehow able to "eat, drink, smoke and sleep underwater, in view of the audience," all of this without benefit of "mechanical appliances for supplying air."

"Professor Baker" of Australia, carrying a gunnysack, entered the pool in street clothes, then submerged and bobbed to the surface moments later in a swimsuit that had been in the sack; a prize went to anyone who could find his clothes or the sack. Professor M. H. Gay's dog Jack was the "highest diving dog in the world."

But the most imaginative events in the early years of the baths were the audience-participation contests. In the "doughnut race" the entrants downed six doughnuts apiece before getting into the water.

Coins were scattered on the bottom of a pool for the "diving for gold" competition, while in the walking-underwater race the contestants had to carry a 50-pound dumbbell in each hand.

Swimmers were assigned lockers and furnished with black top-and-bottom suits. The rules barred bathers with "skin eruptions," smoking (Professor Karl was presumably excepted), peanuts and "improper behavior." The boldest young bravos tried to sneak in by entering with the seawater as it flowed through the pipe from the catch basin when the pool was being filled.

But even by the time Sutro had gotten his baths off to a flying start, his attentions were deflected elsewhere. He had already been coaxed into running for mayor as the Populist candidate despite health problems and his heavy involvement in the baths and other enterprises. According to one story, the stubborn millionaire agreed to run only after he was told that he couldn't possibly win. Easily defeating five opponents, he delivered a buoyant inaugural address in 1895, vowing war on bossism and corruption, a public works program, more patriotism in the schools and better city services.

His mayoral career went downhill immediately. Always uncomfortable delegating responsibility, he was temperamentally unable to share authority with the city's 12-man board of supervisors. As a result, his anticorruption drive went nowhere.

Sutro acted as though he knew he was miscast as mayor and wanted out. Before his first year in office was up he was talking of resigning because of his health. Finally, mercifully, the two-year term, which the San Francisco *Examiner* said he "passed in a state of exasperation," ended. No one asked him to run again.

Friends and foes agreed that serving as mayor was Sutro's one great mistake—it brought out his worst quality, that of righteous mulishness, and no doubt hastened his death. He wrote his brother Ludwig in January 1897 that it was a "perfect blessing" to be liberated from politics and politicians.

It was clearly time for the 66-year-old Sutro to kick back and enjoy his accomplishments and his grandchil-

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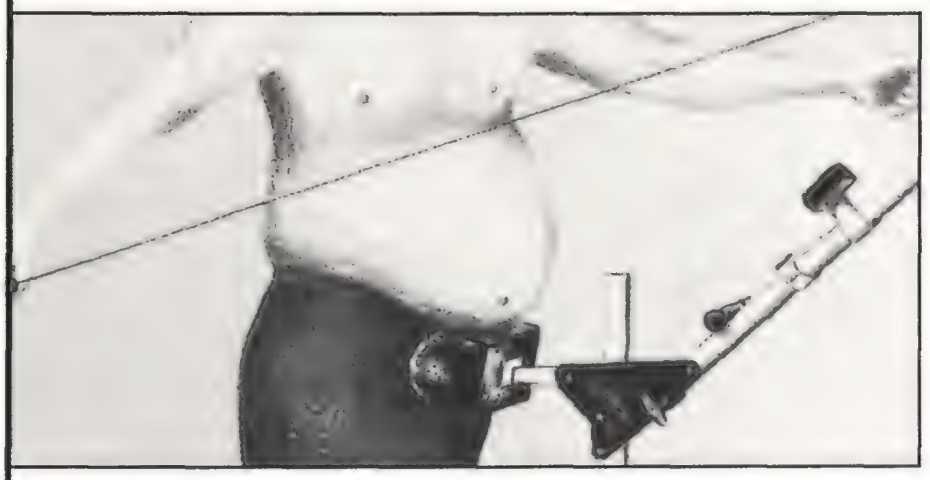

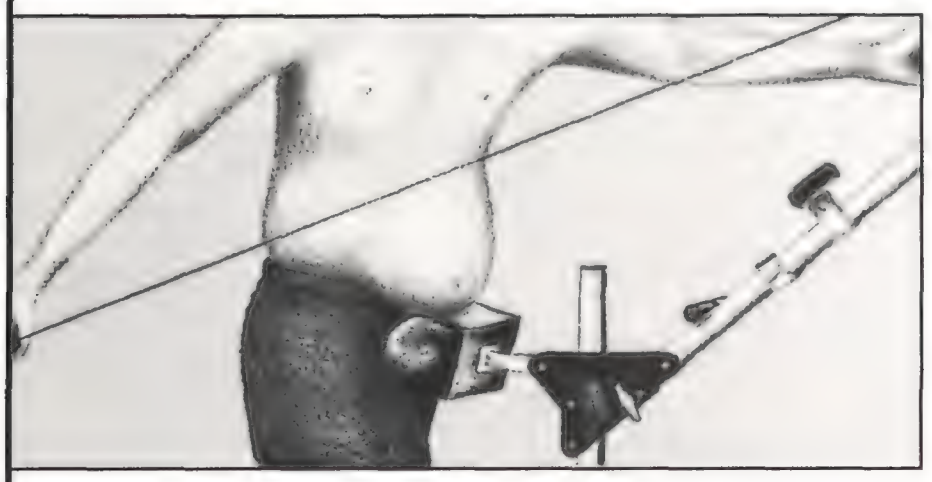

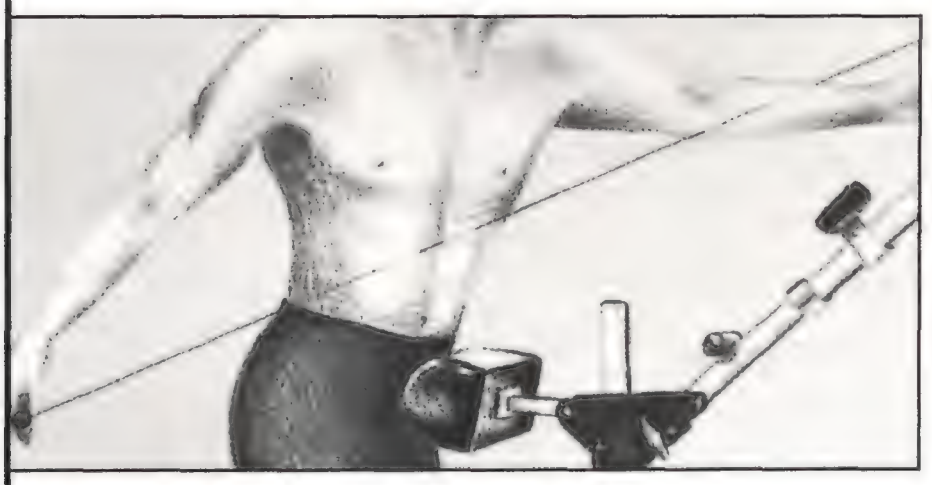

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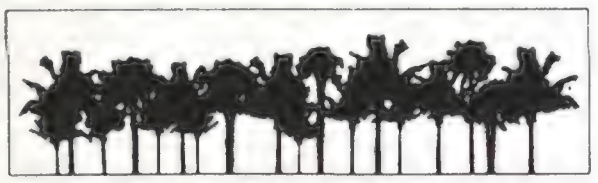

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dren, but plans still buzzed in his brain—a hotel at the beach, a library for his book collection. His daughter Kate scolded him, "[You're] trying to kill yourself" and urged him to relax. He had remained close to his four daughters and two sons; his estranged wife had died in 1893.

But Sutro never recovered after his stormy tour at City Hall. He was not seen in public, even at his beloved baths, after mid-1897. The rumor was that his mind was going—the descriptions sound as if he might have suffered from Alzheimer's disease—but the press was told nothing. In February 1898 he was declared incompetent, and his daughter Emma, a physician, was appointed his guardian. At the time that Emma moved her father from the splendid isolation of Sutro Heights to her home, he was said to be "old, weak, and childish."

He died on August 8, 1898, at age 68. The cause of death was given as diabetes. Only a few friends joined the family at a Jewish service that was led by a rabbi who described Sutro as "one of the most striking figures in the procession of personages that has made the history of the Pacific slope." The baths closed for the funeral.

Sutro Baths would remain a San Francisco institution for 70 years, but the resort's heyday persisted only a decade or so after the death of its visionary builder. The heirs to the $3 million estate never shared Sutro's passion for the baths, much less his willingness to run the place at a loss.

Still, for youngsters who had frolicked there, the baths never lost their magic. Marian Morton Perks swam there regularly in the 1920s. "It was a wonderland," she recalls. "There were so many interesting things, the exhibits and then the slides and rings in the tanks—nobody called them pools. You changed in a little booth into a black suit . . . . I was never blasé about it, I always felt it was an enchanted place."

The Sutro family tried to sell the baths to the city, and when that failed, they gave the building a face-

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lift with a gaudy Coney Island-like entrance in 1934. They put a skating rink over half of the biggest tank and covered the two smaller tanks with basketball and volleyball courts. By the late '40s the baths were running a $15,000 annual deficit and looked it: paint was peeling everywhere, moss grew on some of the walls.

The swimming tanks finally closed right after World War II because the cost of repairing them had become prohibitive. But the museum and rink hung on until early 1966, when plans were announced for a hotel-mall complex at the site, and demolition commenced. A suspicious fire finished the job in June 1966. The hotel was never built, and for the past quarter-century the baths have been a sea-walled, watery ruin.

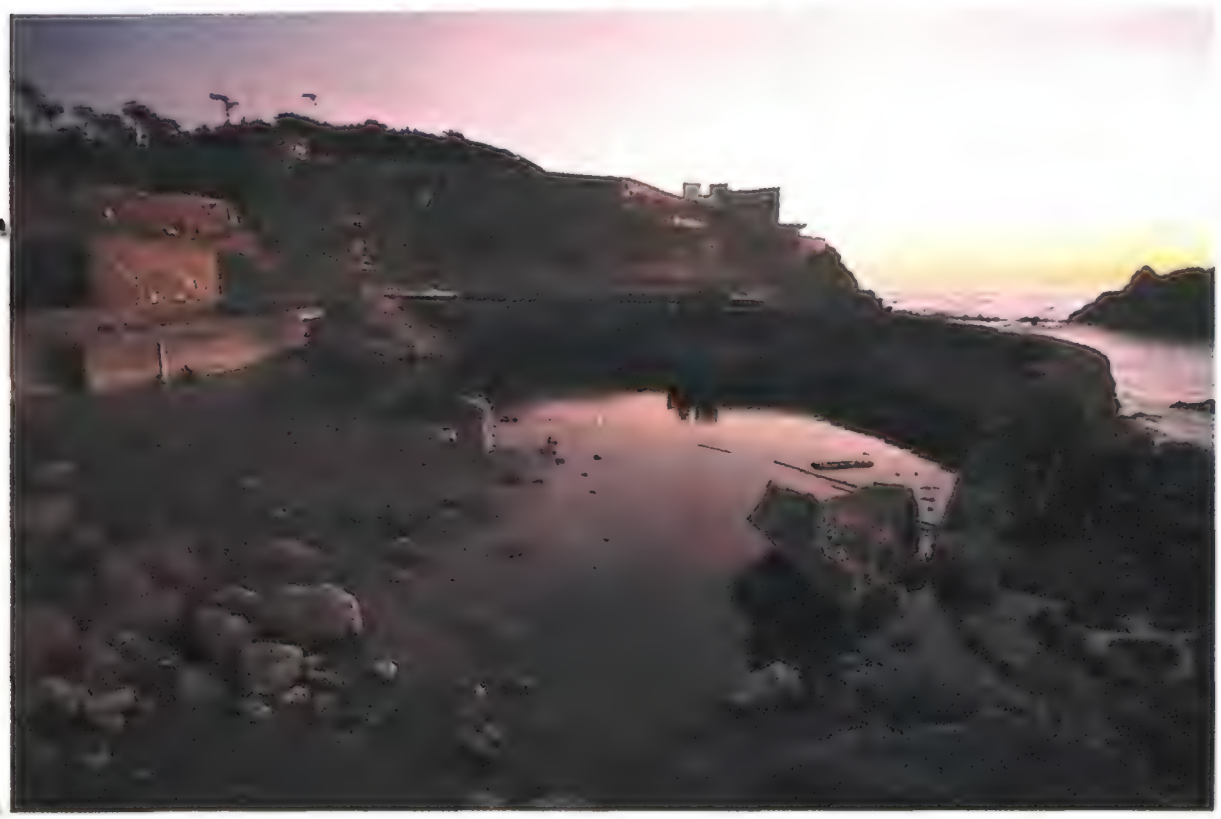
In 1980 the National Park Service bought the site for $5.5 million and made it part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, along with the Cliff House and Sutro Heights, which it had previously acquired. (WPA workers had razed the Sutro house in 1939.)

Time was cruel to Adolph Sutro's monuments to himself—the tunnel later obsolete, the great library partially destroyed, the Heights house leveled, the baths decayed and burned, the railroad long gone. Sutro Forest was neglected and grew wild, the Cliff House, rebuilt after a fire, burned again and was rebuilt again.

The final insult came in 1979, when two boys climbing the cliff below Sutro Heights found a marble urn on a rock ledge overlooking the Pacific. James Delgado, then chief historian for the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, had heard that Sutro had wished to be buried at the Heights, but contemporary accounts said his cremated remains were taken to a San Francisco cemetery. Delgado checked: the urn containing Sutro's ashes was gone. Was he home at last?

Delgado and another ranger removed the urn from the cliff in a driving rainstorm and took it to a funeral home for safekeeping. A few days later, a man identifying himself as a Sutro descendant appeared at the home and was given the urn. "I heard two stories later," Delgado says. "One was that he was reburied at Sutro Heights. The other was that there were no ashes in the urn."

Today, only ruins remain of the glory that was Sutro Baths: in the end, the building was destroyed in a fire of suspicious origin in June 1966.



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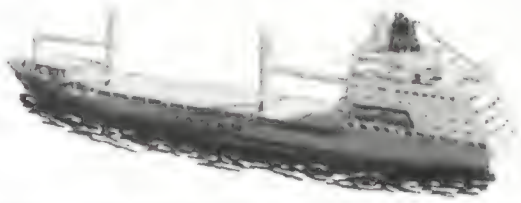

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Book reviews

Komodo monitors (commonly called dragons) lock limbs in a testy turf war.

Beastly Behavior: A Watcher's Guide to How Animals Act and Why
Janine M. Benyus
Illustrated by Juan Carlos Barberis
Addison-Wesley, $29.95

This book should be in the bookcase or backpack of every nonprofessional zoophile, amateur ethologist, armchair naturalist, creature watcher or even just fond relative of young zoo fans. A long introductory essay, "How Animals Behave: A Primer," describes in precise but lively prose the primary activities common to all mammals, birds and reptiles, among them sleeping, communicating, fighting, yawning, grooming, moving, courting, copulating and parenting. Of course we advanced primates have added a few flourishes, but it is sobering to realize how adequately these few words also describe most human behavior. The great differences between, and sometimes within, most species are not in what they do but how they look. This is one of the great charms of nature, but a mystery too since the variations in diet, climate, predators, habitat or history do not quite seem to account for the extravagant extremes in size, structure and ornament of moose and mouse, flamingo and wren, or even borzoi and Chihuahua.

Each of the 20 short subsequent chapters is devoted to a creature of particular appeal, menace, oddity or beauty, such as the panda, crocodile, penguin or peacock. Every section is adorned with detailed drawings, and a chart of "Vital Stats" gives taxonomy, typical size, weight, longevity, and also habitat, a subject on which Benyus has written several guides. A paragraph or two deals with some unique aspect of that animal—like the zebra's handsome camouflage, the crane's courtship dance—as well as with the creature's role in history or myth, or the talismanic value of its horns, ears, tusks or tail. A somber theme is the rapid decline of these wild animals whose tribes have been decimated by pesticides, hunting, poaching and, most inexorably, shrinking habitat.

Benyus often explains the animal's variant on basic behavior patterns: for example, after the male ostrich scrapes out a shallow nest, both the "major hen" and the others in the harem lay their eggs. Then the male and the major hen laboriously hatch them "while the minor hens walk away scot-free." She also notes such colorful pastimes as neck wrestling, knuckle walking, mud wallowing, whisker stropping and feather painting. Even such variations and diversions, however, like the more obviously crucial activities, are presented as survival maneuvers or reproductive strategies—techniques for saving oneself or perpetuating one's genes. Benyus stresses this bleak sociobiology in her introduction. But then, moving from the general to the specific, she cannot entirely avoid a hint of affectionate anthropomorphism (who can—or should?) in the sections on the gentle elephants and sociable zebras, the playful penguins and sea lions—or the dolphins, those clever creatures who nonetheless seem so fond of us.

Any compact compendium of basic animal information provides a great service, but it helps to have it served up so attractively. Along with the drawings and witty paragraph headings, sidebars

brighten the pages: for the lion chapter, "A Mane is a Mixed Blessing" and "What do Males do, Anyway?" Small sketches show how to read each species' body language, to tell a grin from a snarl. The author's scientific descriptions are often enlivened with colloquial comments; on the subject of breeding—a major concern for zoos and naturally for most animals, as well—she says of pandas: "Females can be picky and, because the world's captive community is so limited, finding a compatible mate can be like dating in a very small town."

"The world's captive community" of course means the network of zoos, a subject on which Benyus, like so many animal lovers, is ambivalent. After a grim history of early menageries in a preface called "What's New with Zoos?" she moves on to praise some modern zoos, especially for exhibits designed to duplicate natural habitats. Their animals are healthier and happier than the shabby, moth-eaten, autistic camels and lions one remembers from city zoos of the past. At their best, she suggests, such zoos can provide wholesome entertainment and useful education. Moreover, like most modern zoo directors, she sees the zoo as a Noah's Ark: the very existence of many endangered species may depend on breeding in captivity for later release. There have already been some successes of this kind: the vanishing but now reestablished golden lion tamarin and Arabian oryx. Even so, in a concluding chapter called "Zoo Critique," Benyus laments that many zoos are inadequate or worse: she provides a detailed checklist for evaluating your local zoo, and a chart of how to reform or even close down a serious offender.

But at last there is hope of reconciliation among those who regard zoos as educational, those who condemn them as prisons for animals, those who praise them as nurseries for endangered species, and the many others who find zoos depressing but dread the loss of beauty and the loneliness of a world in which one might never see a live wild animal larger than a raccoon. This common ground is the BioPark. Michael H. Robinson, director of the Smithsonian's National Zoological Park, who calls the conventional zoo "an anachronistic entity," has worked for years to promote this concept of "a holistic form of bioexhibitory portraying life in all its interconnectedness." A BioPark is a large, natural, protected environment containing most of the birds, mammals, insects, trees, flowers and minerals indigenous to a certain region, such as an African savanna—or even several of these extended "exhibits" in one vast area. The antizoo U.S. Humane Society last summer urged the establishment of 6 to 12 large regional BioParks containing native wildlife. And in November 1992, "Amazonia," a tropical rain forest environment, opened at the National Zoo, and Cleveland opened its own large BioPark (see page 54).

Audrey C. Foote is a Washington, D.C. freelance writer and translator.

Paul Scott: A Life of the Author of the Raj Quartet
Hilary Spurling
Norton, $24.95

He began with the image of a girl running in the shadows of the Bibighar Gardens. She is initially unnamed, an anonymous young Englishwoman who represented for writer Paul Scott "the whole feeling of the British in India, and the feeling of India itself—a vast, flat territory, strangely forbidding, somehow incalculable, ugly, beautiful."

Born in 1920, Scott was no son of the British raj, nor the lifelong resident of India that the scope and sweep of his novels about the subcontinent suggest. But a brief sojourn as a soldier in India during World War II struck a chord that would resonate for the rest of Scott's life. He viewed the place as a metaphor of his age, "the spectacle of two nations in violent opposition . . . locked in an imperial embrace of such long standing subtlety it was no longer possible for them to know whether they hated or loved one another. . . ."

There was no popular interest in the imperial raj when Scott embarked in 1964 on a return trip to India. He planned to research what he described as "a big scale novel about the British force and influence." Critics said that E. M. Forster had long ago had the last word on the subject. For Scott, at 43, author of eight novels—all commercial failures—it was a huge gamble, his last chance as a writer. "To breathe fresh air east of Suez might unblock all kinds of barrels," he wrote.

Onetime soldier, accountant, literary agent, writer—all of his life Scott labored under what he described as the "terrible cumulative weight of sustained failure." Work was his salvation, and to

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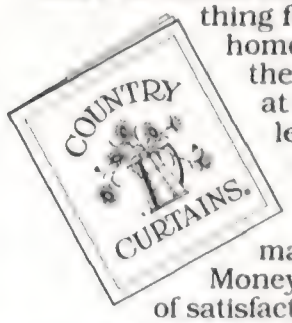

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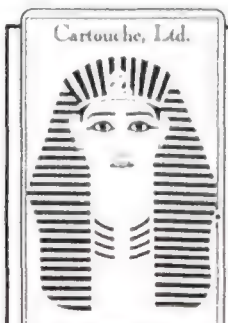
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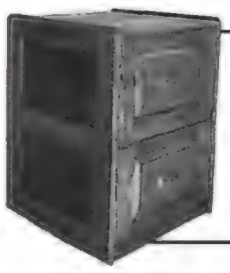
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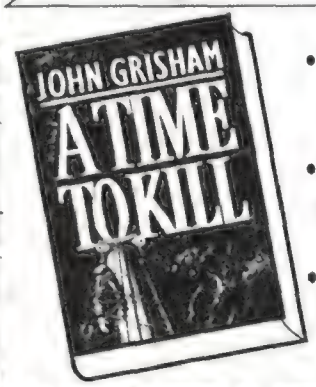

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accomplish this required a full retreat from the outside world. "It was as if he had exiled himself to the one room where there was nothing but the typewriter and the blank page," his daughter said. "It was the making of him as a writer, but the unmaking of him as a human being."

This was a man who disappeared into his study at 7 A.M., emerging to eat lunch in silence and again to watch television in the evening, "gazing with vacant eyes at the screen." This was a man whose "dark and threatening side" prompted his wife to keep an emergency bag packed for 12 years, before walking out on Scott one day in 1976 carrying only a handbag. This was a man who could not settle down at the typewriter without a drink, whose first act of the morning was to finish the whisky poured out the night before. (Spurling mistakenly romanticizes the connection between literature and the bottle: "In the years spent writing the Raj Quartet," she writes, Scott "had used alcohol functionally, almost medicinally, as an essential fuel.")

"Writing is not observation—it is feeling," Scott once said. His creative energy was fired by emotion, by such events as a chance encounter during the war with a British woman who rebuked him for attempting to carry her suitcase, shouting, "No, no. It's because people like me always had our bags carried for us that what happened to us happened."

The writer emphatically rejected the term "historical novelist," and indeed his method seemed to rely as much on intuition as on scholarly research. Blocked in an effort to gain access to files on the Indian National Army, he reports that he didn't persist because "as a novelist . . . the reluctance interested me almost as much, if not more, than the archives would have done." What preoccupied Scott, Spurling reports in this meticulously documented biography, was a notion of the past as "a living root," deeply buried but throwing up shoots to inform the present.

Research for Scott meant questioning Indian cooks and gardeners about their native villages and the amount of money they sent home. It meant spending hours in backyard kitchens watching the preparation of dahi and meat curry. It meant confronting the repulsion he felt for India on one visit, the result of his profound sense of fear, which he would camouflage with a mask of superiority that he described as the "Sahib's face." Scott took no notes during these research trips, but he forgot nothing. Once he recounted a conversation between an Indian acquaintance and a silversmith, admitting, upon being congratulated on his Hindi, that he had not understood a word of what was said, but had followed gesture and intonation.

The pivotal character in the Raj Quartet, Hari Kumar—Harry Coomer—came to Scott after a late-night conversation with Neil Ghosh, a British-educated Indian. For Ghosh, independence had meant alienation from the Oxbridge culture he revered, and rejection by countrymen with whom he felt he had nothing in common. Ghosh's sensitivity and stubbornness, his deep rage and humiliation, and his self-destructive retreat to alcohol suggest a ghostly echo of the character and life of Paul Scott, whose experience of social distinction and snobbery prompted his bitter remark that after a boyhood in a relentlessly class-conscious London neighborhood, "India was *never* a surprise to me."

The Raj Quartet sold modestly on publication and was reprinted a decade later when Scott won England's prestigious Booker Prize in 1977 for his last novel of India, *Staying On*. Success on an unimaginable scale came in 1983 with the television series *The Jewel in the Crown*, but too late for Paul Scott, who died of cancer in 1978.

Paul Scott once said, "You write for an age"; he took 1900-1945 as his own.

Karl Ackerman is a writer and reviewer who lives in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Additional reading

Phenomena (p. 22)

The Making of the Atomic Bomb by Richard Rhodes, Touchstone (New York), 1988

Object at hand (p. 28)

Royal Benin Art by Bryna Freyer, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987

Animals in Benin: A Guide for Children and Their Adult Friends by Veronika Jenke and Kate Archie, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1992

Mississippi River (p. 36)

Mississippi River Reader, edited by Wright Morris, Anchor Books, 1962

Old Glory, An American Voyage by Jonathan Raban, Simon and Schuster, 1981

God of the Country: A Voyage on the Mississippi River, edited by Ross Howell jr. and Carolyn Clark, Thomasson, Grant & Howell (Charlottesville, Virginia), 1986

The Mississippi River Commission: An American Epic by Michael Robinson, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Vicksburg, Mississippi), 1989

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Amazonia (p. 54)

Amazonia, edited by Ghillean T. Prance and Thomas E. Lovejoy, Pergamon Press (New York), 1985

Amazonia, photographs and text by Loren McIntyre, Sierra Club Books, 1991

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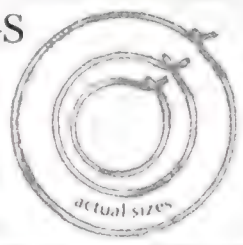

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The Fate of the Forest: Developers, Destroyers, and Defenders of the Amazon by Susanna Hecht and Alexander Cockburn, Verson (New York), 1989

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Julie Taymor (p. 62)

"The Looking Glass World of Julie Taymor" by Mel Gussow, *New York Times Magazine*, March 22, 1992

The Short Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe, edited by Stuart Levine and Susan Levine, University of Illinois Press, 1990

Gossip (p. 76)

Capote: A Biography by Gerald Clark, Ballantine Books, 1988

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Winchell: His Life and Times by Herman Klurfeld, Praeger, 1976

American Indian Dance Theatre (p. 90)

Native American Dance: Ceremonies and Social Traditions, edited by Charlotte Heth, National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 1992

Flea markets (p. 100)

"Treasure Hunting in 1990" by E. Potter, *Money*, August 1990

"The Great Bazaars: Where the Buys Are" by Lee Alan Buttala, *Metropolitan Home*, January 1992

Cooper-Hewitt maps (p. 112)

The Power of Maps by Denis Wood, Guilford Press, 1992

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Sutro Baths (p. 120)

Adolph Sutro: A Biography by Robert E. Stewart jr. and Mary Frances Stewart, Howell-North Books (Berkeley, California), 1964

San Francisciana: Photographs of Sutro Baths by Marilyn Blaisdell (self-published), 1987

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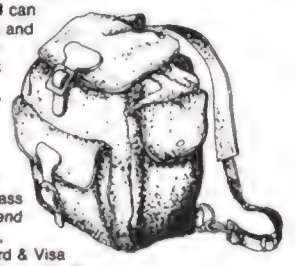

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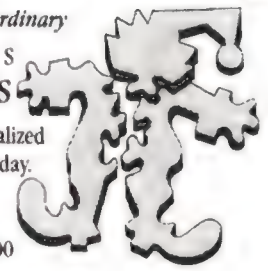

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Begin your visit at the Smithsonian Information Center's Associates' Reception desk—open from 9 A.M. to 4 P.M. daily—in the Castle. The Associates' Court Dining Room, located in the National Museum of Natural History, is open daily, 11 A.M. to 3 P.M.

Freer remains closed

The Freer Gallery of Art is closed until May 9, 1993.

National Black History Month

During February the Smithsonian will celebrate National Black History Month with a variety of programs and activities. For information call (202) 357-2700, 9 A.M. to 4 P.M., Monday through Saturday. For 24-hour recording call (202) 357-4574, starting February 1.

Musical Weekend

This year's Smithsonian Musical Weekend, April 30-May 2, marks the 21st anniversary of the Friends of Music at the Smithsonian. Highlights include performances by the National Symphony Orchestra and the Smithsonian Chamber Players; dinners at the Renwick Gallery and the National Air and Space Museum; tea and music at the Moroccan Embassy; breakfast at the Zoo. For information write: Musical Weekend, Box 11271, Washington, D.C. 20008.

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The Contributing Membership supports the Institution's work in education, research and collections programs. Partially tax-deductible contribution categories are: Supporting, $60 (available only to non-D.C. area residents); Donor, $125; Sponsoring, $300; Sustaining, $600; Patron, $1,200; James Smithson Society, $2,000. Members enjoy special benefits including Smithsonian publications, the engagement calendar and behind-the-scenes tours. For more information write to The Contributing Membership, 1100 Jefferson Drive, S.W., Smithsonian, Washington, D.C. 20560, or call (202) 357-1699.

Special February exhibits, events

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
Joined Colors: Decoration and Meaning in Chinese Porcelain (through November 28) Exhibition features 15th- through 19th-century polychrome porcelains with overglaze enamel decoration. See *Highlights continued*, page 142.
19th-Century Photographs from Sri Lanka (through March 21) Images taken by British photographers W.L.H. Skeen and Charles T. Scowen.
The Golden Age of Sculpture from Sri Lanka (through September 26) Ancient masterpieces of bronze casting.

National Museum of African Art
Elmina: Art and Trade on the West African Coast (through February 28) Exhibit explores early encounter between Africa and Europe by focusing on the 15th-century trading post of Elmina.
Images of Power and Identity Permanent exhibition showcases 100 masterworks from the collection.

National Zoological Park
Amazonia New permanent installation re-creates a microcosm of the world's largest rain forest and river habitat. Exhibition explores the wonders of this richly diverse ecosystem (see page 54).

National Museum of Natural History
Seeds of Change (through May 23) Exhibit looks at the changes brought about by the exchange begun 500 years ago between the Old World and the New.
EarthSense (through September 6) Ex-

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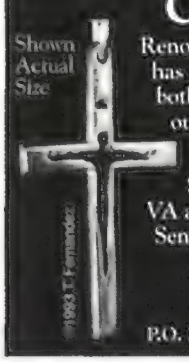
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National Museum of American History
Manufactured Weather (February 16-July 15) Display examines the development of heating and cooling technologies in America between 1850 and 1950.
Traditional Organ Building in the United States (through July 11) The revival of 17th- and 18th-century practices of pipe organ manufacture.
Put the City Up: Chicago Architecture, 1800-1992 (through March 14) Exhibit traces city's architectural development.

National Air and Space Museum
Where Next, Columbus? New gallery looks ahead to the next 500 years of exploration, examining the scientific, technological, economic, ethical and political issues surrounding future space travel.
Air Power in World War II: Republic P-47 Thunderbolt (through May 1) Exhibition features the multirole fighter.
Fires of Kuwait (6:45 P.M. daily) New Imax film focuses on the efforts to extinguish the oil-well fires in Kuwait.

Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden
Susan Rothenberg: Paintings and Drawings (February 10-May 9) Retrospective encompasses 20 years of work by the contemporary American artist.
Directions—Jac Leirner (through March 14) Sculptures by the Brazilian artist raise compelling questions about contemporary value systems.

National Museum of American Art
Prints by California Artists (through February 15) Prints by 20th-century artists provide context for the Wayne Thiebaud exhibit (below).
Vision and Revision: The Hand-Colored Prints of Wayne Thiebaud (through February 15) Show features 70 works by the noted American artist.

Renwick Gallery
Drawings by Craft Artists (through March 21) Drawing offers an alternative avenue of expression for six established craft artists.

National Portrait Gallery
In Pursuit of Fame: Rembrandt Peale 1778-1860 (through February 15) First large-scale exhibit on the life and work of the early 19th-century painter.
The Family 1976: Richard Avedon's Portraits for Rolling Stone (through June 6) Portraits by the famed photographer

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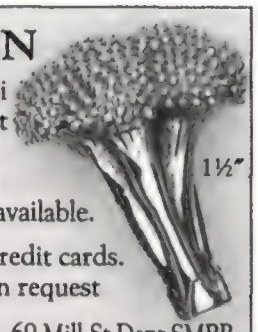
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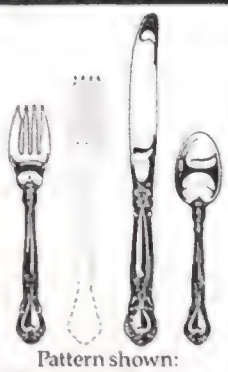

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Cooper-Hewitt Museum (New York)
The Power of Maps (through March 7) Exhibition of more than 300 historic and contemporary maps looks at an unexpected dimension of design in our everyday world (see page 112).
From Background to Foreground: Looking at an 18th-Century Wallpaper (through April 6) Exhibit examines the historic and social context of a wallpaper's design and manufacture.

Exhibition catalogs

Catalogs available currently include:
Seeds of Change ($39.95/$24.95 paper)
Vision and Revision: Hand-Colored Prints by Wayne Thiebaud ($35/$19.95 paper)
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The Office of Elementary and Secondary Education offers a variety of programs, publications and services for teachers of prekindergarten through grade 12 nationwide. The Second Edition of the *Smithsonian Resource Guide for Teachers* is now available to teachers, free of charge. The *Guide* lists curriculum kits, educational publications, audiovisual tools and other resources available from the Smithsonian Institution, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the National Gallery of Art and Reading Is Fundamental. For copies, write: Resource Guide, OESE, Smithsonian Institution, Arts and Indus-

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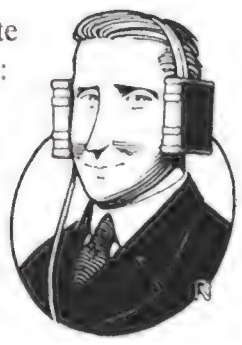

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Smithsonian National Associates

The month of February will bring the National Associates Program U.S. and International Events to Honolulu, Hawaii. The program, February 24-28, will include sessions on tropical rain forests, plate tectonics and volcanoes

Associates in Hawaii will receive invitational brochures. For information, contact: U.S. and International Events, 490 L'Enfant Plaza, S.W., Suite 4210, Washington, D.C. 20560; (202) 287-3210.

Resident Associate Program

To become a Resident Associate, or for fee and ticket information, call (202) 357-3030. February events include:
Strange Feet: A Musical Theater Piece for a Dinosaur Hall (February 24, 26, 27, 28; 8 P.M.) "Site-specific" production by En Garde Arts uses Natural History Museum's dinosaur exhibit as its set.
Race—The American Dilemma (February 24; 8 P.M.) Lecture by distinguished civil rights attorney Morris Dees.

Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

SITES organizes and circulates exhibitions to cities throughout the United States and abroad. To sponsor a show in your community, write SITES, Smithsonian, Washington, D.C. 20560. Here are some February exhibits:
• Bend, Oregon (February 20-July 18) *Strength and Diversity: Japanese American Women 1885-1990,* High Desert Museum.
• Lexington, Massachusetts (February 7-July 4) *Fred E. Miller: Photographer of the Crows,* Museum of Our National Heritage.

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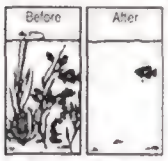

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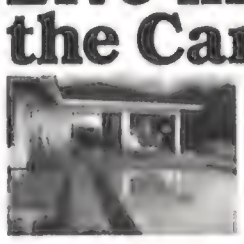

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Highlights continued

Radiant porcelains from imperial China

Portents of good fortune, long life, wealth and honor. Intimations of immortality. Messages from another time, another world. Messages couched in form and color and design, fixed in clay.

In 1402 the Jianwen emperor ordered the establishment of an imperial porcelain factory in the town of Jingdezhen in southern China. The sole mission of the workshop was to produce porcelains for the court to use in state and religious ceremonies and for tableware and gifts. Some orders were for tens of thousands of pieces, many of which were intricately decorated with multicolored enamel designs. The shapes, colors and pictorial motifs of these objects often bespeak the setting or purpose for which they were used. Many of the images have specific symbolic meanings that tell us about the values important to the pleasure-loving courts of the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) emperors.

Proof of the artistic excellence of Jingdezhen's production is now on view at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery through November 28. "Joined Colors: Decoration and Meaning in Chinese Porcelain" showcases 79 pieces of imperial Ming and Qing porcelain on loan from members of the Min Chiu Society, a group of Hong Kong collectors.

In imperial China, ceramics were generally meant to be enjoyed and admired on three levels: esthetic, technical and symbolic. This exhibition examines and interprets the meaning of shape, color and symbol in these works. A dish with tangerines and pomegranates superimposed on an incised design of five-clawed dragons, for example, links the fortune of the royal house to the auspicious messages conveyed by the painted, polychrome images. The many-seeded pomegranate represents fertility; the word for tangerine puns a word that means "propitious."

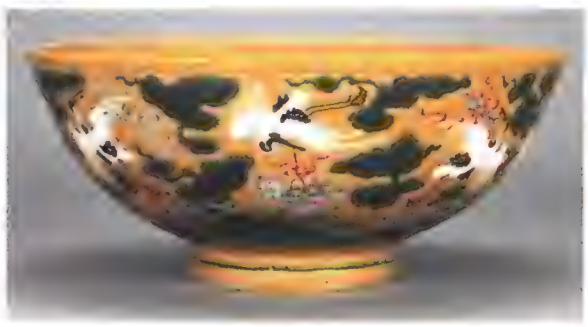
"Decorated porcelain was not just an artistic triumph for China," write the show's curators Jan Stuart and Louise Cort. "The objects are important documents of cultural values and attitudes."
Diane M. Bolz

Qing dynasty polychrome bowl bears array of flowers from different seasons.

Ming dish was molded in form of lotus, a Buddhist symbol of spiritual purity.

Covered jar combines imperial image of five-clawed dragon, Buddhist symbols.

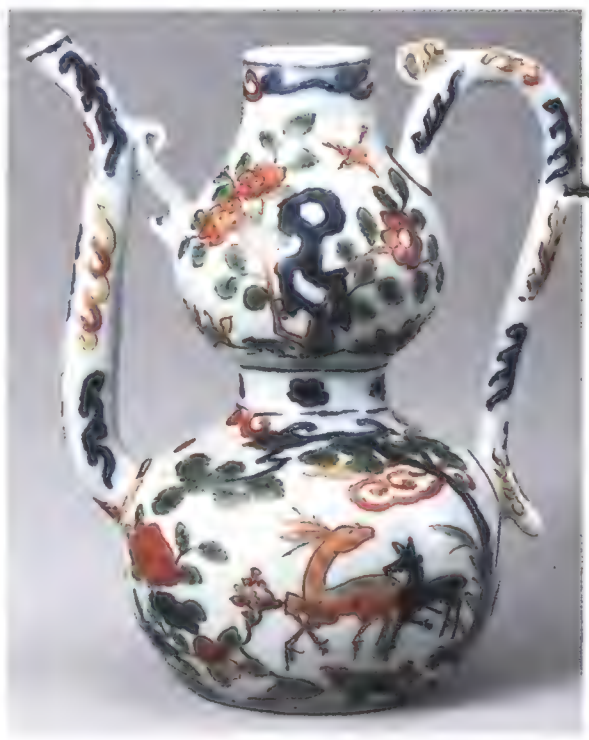
Porcelain teapot with geometric dragon motif is reminiscent of enameled metal.



Bowl's cranes, omens of longevity, hold emblems of the Daoist Eight Immortals.

Peony-shaped cup, a commemorative for soldiers, augers honor and wealth.

Dish with pomegranates and tangerines portends fertility and good fortune.



Ming dynasty gourd-shaped ewer sports deer, pine—emblems of eternal life.

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By BASIL CARSBURY
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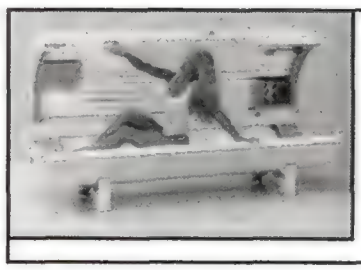

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By Bailey White

You can give a gator a mike, but you can't make him bellow

Many years ago a man came down here to our town in southern Georgia with a whole station wagon full of recording equipment. He was on a quest to acquire and preserve amazing and unusual natural sounds from all over the world. He had just been in the South Seas recording Tasmanian devils, and somewhere he had heard about my aunt's alligator, one she had trained to bellow on command.

This was back in the days when alligators had been hunted to the brink of extinction, and people believed that their bellow, one of the most truly impressive of all animal sounds, might soon be lost forever.

My aunt loaded Mr. Verhoeven and all his recording equipment into her pickup truck and backed him down to the edge of the pond where the alligator lived. Then she revved the engine a couple of times, and pretty soon the gator showed up.

We hadn't been too impressed with Mr. Verhoeven at first. He just seemed like a quiet little man with quivering hands and a nervous flicker in his eyes. But when that alligator crawled up out of the mud, Mr. Verhoeven slung his tape recorder over his shoulder, plugged in a bunch of black cables, pressed "record," then vaulted out of the truck and crawled down the bank to meet him. We'd never seen anyone do that before. My aunt's alligator ate things that came out of the back of that truck. He ate everything that came out of the back of that truck. But we didn't want to be recorded, so we didn't say anything.

My aunt revved the engine a few more times, then she shut it off. A quail whistled. The hot engine ticked. Then we saw the alligator swell up. Mr. Verhoeven stuck out a microphone, right up to those ragged jaws. The alligator slumped down in the middle. We saw the water begin to quiver around his jowls, and the bellowing began. It went on for a full two minutes. Mr. Verhoeven held that microphone steady with all his might and all his heart.

When it ended, Mr. Verhoeven and the alligator moved at the same time. Mr. Verhoeven made it into the back of the truck in two leaps, but it seemed like that alligator took flight. He crashed into the tailgate just as Mr. Verhoeven hit the back of the cab. The alligator left a big dent in the tailgate, with tooth marks scraped through the paint, and Mr. Verhoeven left a shiny smear down the back of the cab where he rubbed the dust off as he slumped down.

We were impressed. Now we understood that nervous flicker in Mr. Verhoeven's eyes and those quivering hands.

And now that it was all over, Mr. Verhoeven became quite garrulous. He sat down on our porch and eagerly showed us how his equipment worked. He played back the alligator bellowing. It was amazing. It was better than the real thing. You could hear drops of water fall from the alligator's top teeth into the muddy puddle that swirled around his bottom jaw. You could hear that little pink flap of skin at the back of his throat open up. You could hear time, and distance. You could hear silence.

Then Mr. Verhoeven played some of his other recordings for us. He played star-nosed moles snuffling on a moonlit night. He played an almost extinct worm crawling through dead leaves. He played whales, he played sharks, he played icebergs groaning.

But when he started playing his recording of Viennese cats mating, our dog began to howl. It was an old bird dog, tied up to his doghouse in the backyard, and he really began to do some fancy howling. It was almost like a yodel. Mr. Verhoeven got excited. "I've never heard a dog do that," he said.

Quick as a flash he whipped out his microphone. The dog howled, the little needle jumped into the red, and Mr. Verhoeven did his work.

After a few minutes the dog shut up. Mr. Verhoeven began dismantling his equipment. He unplugged the cables, shoved all the levers over to the far left and rewound the tape. Then he stopped. His hands stopped trembling. His eyes grew steady. He didn't breathe. Something was wrong. He had erased his alligator recording. He had taped the howling dog right over it.

So, back we went to the edge of the pond, back Mr. Verhoeven crawled into the mud. My aunt revved and revved the engine. But the alligator just lay there, eye to eye with Mr. Verhoeven. He didn't raise up his tail. He didn't raise up his head. He didn't slump down in the middle. Water didn't quiver around his jowls. He just lay silent in the mud and glared at Mr. Verhoeven.

Finally we went home. Mr. Verhoeven packed up, bid us a desultory goodbye and went off to record the courtship rituals of the Komodo dragon. We never heard from him again.

Since then, laws protecting alligators have resulted in a resurgence in their population. They're no longer threatened by extinction. And almost any summer night, in any Southern swamp or river or pond, you can hear alligators bellowing. I don't worry about them anymore. But I sometimes wonder whatever happened to that little Mr. Verhoeven.

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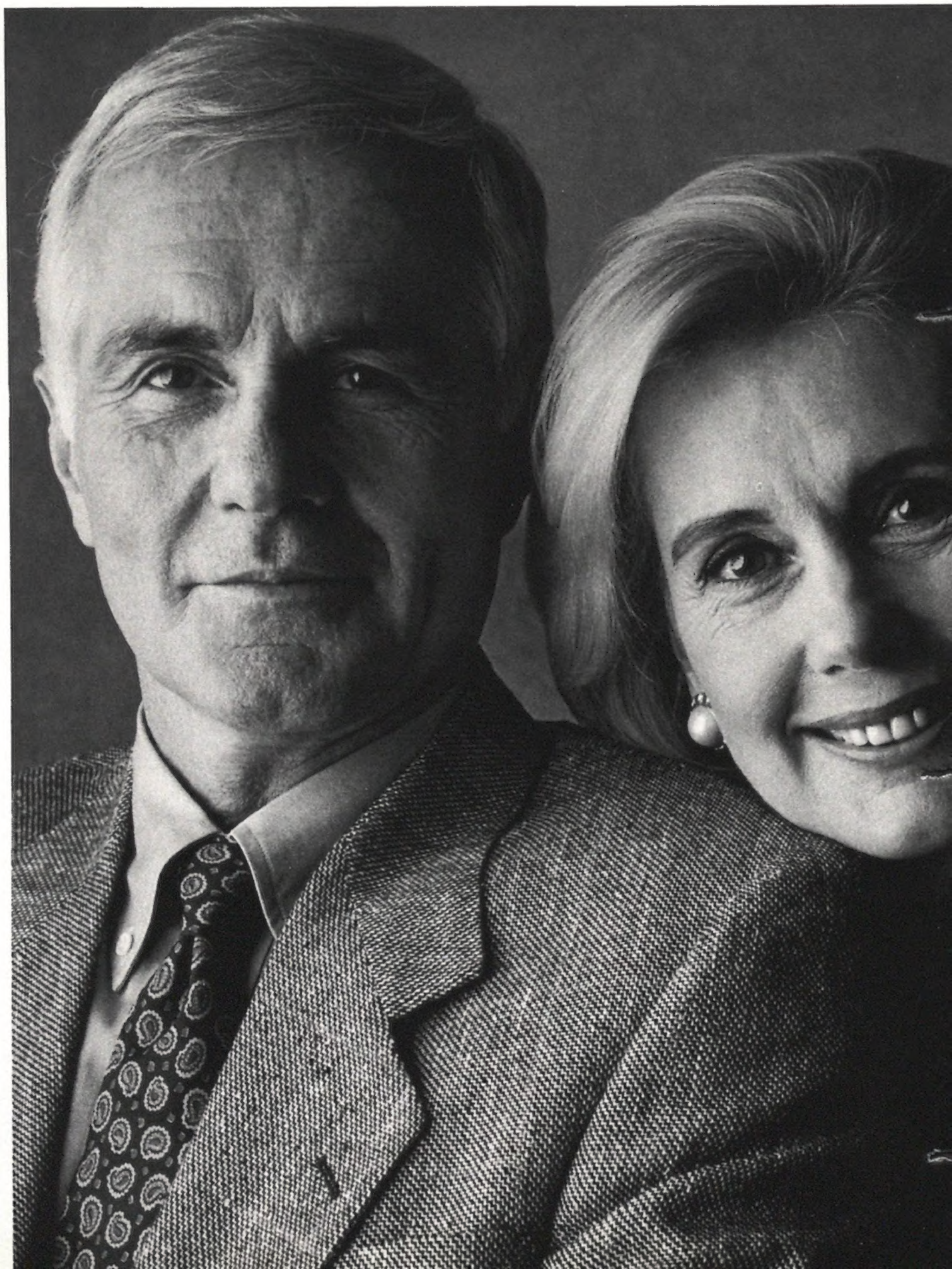
What every man should know about his prostate.



What and where the prostate is

Only men have a prostate. It's a walnut-sized gland located at the base of the bladder. It surrounds a part of the urethra, the tube that carries urine from the bladder through the penis.

The prostate supplies the milky fluid that helps transport sperm through the penis during ejaculation. The prostatic fluid also aids conception by providing support and nourishment for the sperm and helping to make the vaginal canal less acidic.

What an enlarged prostate is

In most men, after age 45, the prostate starts to enlarge and may continue to enlarge for the rest of a man's life. This growth may be benign prostate enlargement, a noncancerous condition. A major cause is the activity of a key hormone.

By itself, benign prostate enlargement isn't a problem. But as the prostate continues to grow, it can squeeze the urethra (like pinching a straw) and interfere with the normal flow of urine, causing uncomfortable and embarrassing symptoms.

Benign prostate enlargement is a common medical finding in older men. However, not every man develops the condition, and in those who do, it is not always progressive.

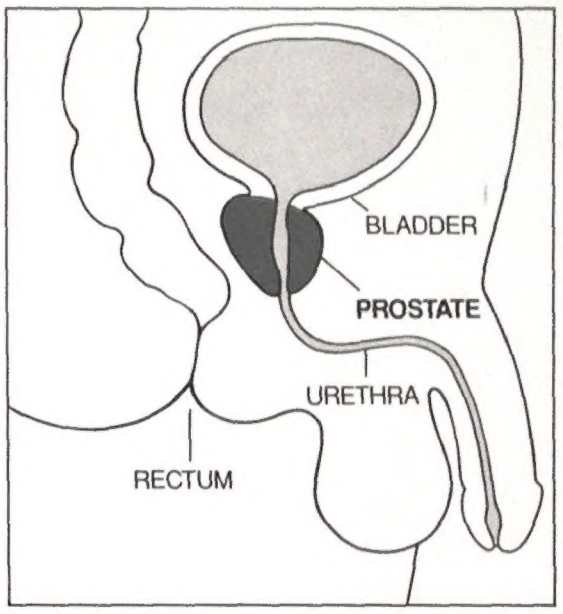
The urinary symptoms of an enlarged prostate

Among the symptoms commonly associated with an enlarged prostate are more frequent urination, especially during the night, or the sudden, almost uncontrollable urge to urinate. The added pressure on the urethra can also cause a weak, interrupted urine stream, a sense of the bladder not emptying completely, leakage, and difficulty in starting urination. It can even result in total blockage, a serious condition.

Why you should consult the doctor

Symptomatic benign prostate enlargement can be helped. Recent advances in treatment have been made, and today your doctor has several options. So now, more than ever, is an excellent time to consult your doctor. You and your doctor should discuss which treatment option would be best for you.

If you experience any symptoms, see your doctor and speak frankly about the problem. A simple rectal examination enables the doctor to feel, with a gloved finger, the size and condition of the prostate. This exam, and other tests the doctor may recommend, will also help to rule out the possibility of prostate cancer. Benign prostate enlargement is not cancer and does not turn into cancer.



The prostate is located at the base of the bladder. It surrounds a part of the urethra, the tube that carries urine from the bladder through the penis. As the prostate enlarges, it can squeeze the urethra and cause urinary problems.

These days, prostate problems don't have to interfere with living your life to the fullest. That's what every man should know.

Talk to your doctor, soon. And, for a free booklet with more information, call 1-800-635-4452.

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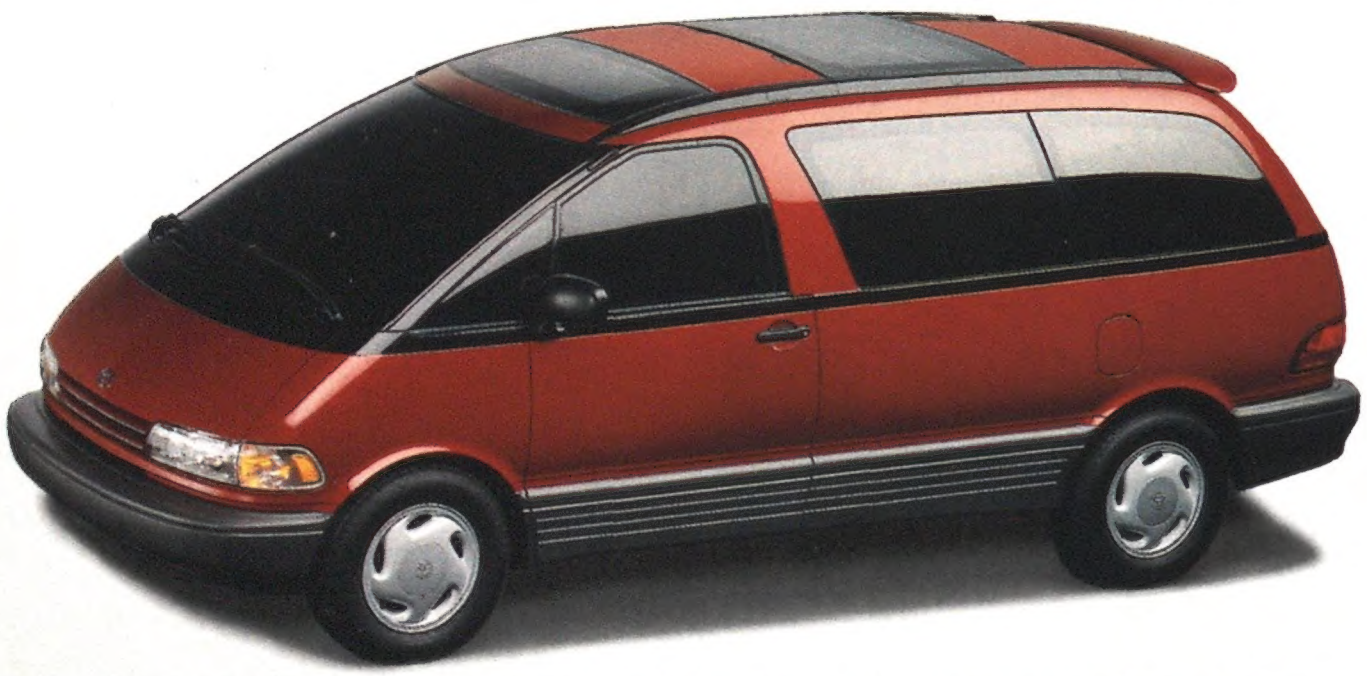

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